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THE WOODMAN;

A ROMANCE

OF

THE TIMES OF RICHARD III.

BY

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE WOODMAN.

CHAPTER I.

It was like a cloud passing away from a summer sky. It was, as when a weary traveller laying down the heavy burden he has carried far, by the side of the road, stretches his freed limbs in an interval of rest. Such was the effect of Lord Fulmer's departure from Chidlow. Iola's light and buoyant heart bounded up from beneath the load; all her bright and happy spirits returned! the smile came back to

her lip; and, though the rose took longer to expand upon her cheek again, yet, after a night of sweet, calm rest, some part of the bloom had returned.

Constance was never very gay; but she was cheerful. Chartley felt that a source of constant irritation and annoyance was removed; and, with the happy facility of youth, he prepared to enjoy the present hour, careless of fortune's turn the next. Even the abbess, though she knew little or nothing of what had been passing in the hearts around her, seemed to share in the relief, and laughed and talked in merry mood, especially with Chartley, who was an object of high admiration to her. Clear sighted Sir William Arden, who had seen right well, that Chartley and his rival could not go on long in the same dwelling without danger of bloodshed, felt his apprehensions removed; and Sir Edward Hungerford remarked:—

"Well, I am glad Fulmer is gone; for he was turning marvellous fierce; and he wore such an ill appointed doublet. It was painful

to see the blue and yellow, and made one think of some strange bird."

Only the good pompous lord of the castle seemed unchanged; and he, "full of wise saws and modern instances," walked gravely about, reasoning in very trite sort upon all he saw, and lecturing rather than conversing.

Early in the morning of the day after Fulmer's departure, all those who were mere guests, invited for a day or two, took their leave and left the castle. The abbess proposed to return to her cure on the following morning; and Lord Calverly was laying out various plans for making the heavy time pass lightly, when a courier arrived with letters from the king's lieutenant in the county.

"Now, good faith," he said, "this is unfortunate; for it breaks all my purposes. This noble lord here, requires my immediate presence, to consult as to the best and most approved means of preserving peace and tranquillity in the county. He knows I have some experience in such things; and, though

my judgment be but a poor judgment, yet he has confidence therein.—Strange stories are current, he says, of meetings of peasantry, by night, and strangers coming from distant parts to be present thereat. God forefend that there should be new troubles coming! But I must to horse and away. I will return before night; and, in the mean time, lords and ladies, you must amuse yourselves as best you may. There are fish in the stream, deer in the park, chess, dice, and other games in the little hall, instruments of music in the gallery, lutes, citherns, and the rest, so that you have means of entertainment if you seek it; and, good faith, if you are dull I cannot help it; for you know, my Lord Chartley, the call of duty is imperative, and courtesy, which gives place to nothing else, must yield to that."

They were not dull; but how shall I describe the passing of that day? To Chartley and to Iola, it was a long draught of the cup of joy. Did they drink too deeply? I almost fear they did. Chartley *resolved* to act in all things

prudently, to be calm, quiet, and upon his guard, though courteous and easy, as he would be to any lady in whom he had no interest. Iola *resolved* neither to be cold nor warm in manner towards him, neither to encourage nor to repel, to seek nor to avoid, to let his conduct be the guide of hers, to govern her feelings and to tranquillise her heart.

Oh, resolutions, resolutions! How that heart, which was to be so tranquil, beat, when her uncle rode away, and she felt herself left with him she loved, to pass the hours almost as they would! Heaven knows how they flew. Chartley was often with her. He did not shut himself in his chamber. He did not ride out to hunt, nor walk forth to meditate alone. At first he conversed with her, as they had done at their meeting in the abbey, gaily, cheerfully, with a vein of thought running through the merriment, and a touch of feeling softening the whole. But they were sometimes left alone together; and gradually they began to call up the memories of the past, to talk of scenes and

incidents which had occurred, and words which had been spoken during the long adventurous night they had passed in the forest. It was dangerous ground; they felt it shake beneath them; but yet they would not move away. Their hearts thrilled as they spoke. Iola, with the eye of memory, saw Chartley sitting at her feet; and he, in fancy, felt her breath fanning his cheek as her head drooped upon his shoulder in sleep. Oh, how treacherous associations will open the gates of the heart to any enemy that desires to enter! They approached nearer and nearer to subjects which they had determined to avoid: they even spoke of them in circuitous and ambiguous phrases. The words which they uttered did not express their full meaning; but the tones and the looks did; and, by the time that the sun had sunk to within half an hour's journey of the horizon, Iola and Chartley knew that they loved each other, as well as if they had spoken and vowed it a thousand times.

She was agitated, much agitated, it is true,

but perhaps less so than he was; and to see why, we must look for a moment into their hearts. Iola felt that in loving him she was doing no wrong, that the contract which bound her to Lord Fulmer was altogether void and invalid, that marriages in infancy, where that mutual and reasonable consent is absent, upon which, every contract must be based, were altogether unlawful; and that therefore, morally and religiously, she was as free as if her relations had never unjustly made a promise in her name. It may be that she had been easily convinced—it may be that love for one and disliking for another, had smoothed the way for such conviction; but still she *was* convinced; and no consciousness of doing wrong added weight to other emotions. She might contemplate the future with dread; she might gaze upon the coming days as upon a wide sea of tumultuous waves, through which she could see no track, beyond which appeared no shore; and she might tremble lest the billows should overwhelm her. But she felt confident in the pro-

tection of Heaven, and sure that she was doing nought to forfeit it.

Not so exactly Chartley. Not alone the future, but the present also, had its darkness for him. He knew not her exact situation; he knew not whether the ceremonies of the church —often in those days performed between mere children, and looked upon when once performed, as a sacrament, merely requiring an after benediction to be full and complete—had or had not taken place between her and Lord Fulmer. His reason might teach him that such espousals, where neither the heart nor the judgment were consulted, were in themselves wicked and dangerous; but his mind had not yet reached the point of considering them quite invalid. He had been brought up as a strict Roman Catholic. It was the only religion tolerated in his native land; and, although he could not but see, that gross corruptions had crept into the church to which he belonged, and that many of the grossest of those corruptions had been made the foundation of dog-

mas even more dangerous than themselves; yet not having met with any of the followers of Wickliffe, he had never heard the heresies, the idolatries, or the usurpations of the Roman church fully exposed—nor indeed attacked—till passing through Bohemia, in his return from the East, he had met with some of the disciples of Huss at a small road-side inn. The conversation had been free; for, far from large towns, the doctrines, which the council of Constance could not suppress, were more boldly spoken; and Chartley heard words which shook his faith in the infallibility of Rome, and made him determine to inquire and judge for himself at an after period. He had not yet inquired, however; and, even while he gave way to the impulses of the heart, he felt doubtful, fearful of his own conduct. Had such not been the case, the passion in his breast would have found open and undisguised utterance. Dangers and difficulties he would have set at nought; impediments he would have overleaped, with the knowledge that he was loved in return. But

now he doubted, as I have said, hesitated, suffered his love to be seen, rather than declared it openly.

The abbess sat embroidering at one end of the hall, while Iola and Chartley stood together in the oriel window at the other; and Sir William Arden, with the right knee thrown across the left, and his head bent, pored over the miniatures in a richly illuminated manuscript of Monstrelet, lifting his eyes from time to time, with a thoughtful look towards Chartley and Iola, and thinking, if the truth must be told, that Constance was somewhat long absent. The glow of the evening sun, poured full through the window at which the lovers were standing, concentrated upon them by the stone work; and, both so beautiful and full of grace, they looked in that haze of golden beams, like the old pictures of saints in glory. Just at that moment, Constance entered the hall with a light step, and a more cheerful look than usual. She too had been reading; and she had found what she sought, truth—truth, which came

home to her own heart, and dispelled every doubt and shadow within it. She looked up at the window, as she crossed the hall, and said in a low, sweet voice :

"What a fair evening! The sunset must look beautiful from the ramparts."

"So it must!" exclaimed Iola. "Let us go out and enjoy it. Will you come, dear lady mother?" she added, raising her voice to reach the ear of the abbess.

"No, dear child, no," replied the elder lady, "I must finish this cat's head. I never saw such a troublesome puss in my life;" and she laughed merrily. "I cannot get her whiskers in, all I can do. When I make them black, they look like a spot of ink, and when I make them white, they look like a drop of cream— But go, my children, go. The evening is beautiful; and sunsets and sunrises, and such sort of things do young people good. Forget not to tell your beads, Iola, as he goes down; for no one can ever tell what his rising may look upon."

Without any other covering of the head, than that which they wore in the house, the two girls, went forth with Chartley. Sir William starting up and following. It need not be asked how the party divided itself. Ah, it is a pleasant number, four. It does not admit of much variety ; but, on most occasions it is perfect in itself. Happy Iola, how gaily she walked on by Chartley's side, round those same walls which she had trod some evenings before, with a pale cheek and anxious eye, and a heart well nigh despairing. Now, all the scene was bright and beautiful, on the one side spreading out the purple glow of evening ; on the other, the pale primrose of the west growing fainter at the approach of night, and the golden hills all round crowning themselves with the beams of the departing sun. As if to leave them free room, to say all that might be sweet, yet dangerous to say, Sir William Arden and Constance lingered a good way behind, paused often, once or twice sat down, till Iola and Chartley, circling all round the walls, came back to them again.

What was Sir William Arden doing? I verily believe he was making love in his own peculiar way; for, every now and then, in the midst of smiles at some odd frank speech, a faint blush fluttered over Constance's fair cheek, as if she felt that, in his warmer words, there was an allusion to herself.

Chartley and Iola passed them by, each party so full of their own thoughts, as not to notice the other.

"It was indeed," said Chartley, "a night ever to be remembered—at least by me—a night full of sensations new, and deep, and thrilling. Sensations known but once in a whole lifetime. Nor do I think that you will ever forget it. Did I not tell you, that it was one of those points of time which raise their heads above the waste of the past, and are seen like a mountain peak, till man is at the end of his journey?"

"It cannot be forgot, indeed," replied Iola, and cast her eyes down thoughtfully.

"Strange words, you spoke that night," continued Chartley. "Words that to me, were

then like the mysterious figures upon Egyptian stones, of which I could interpret nothing. Now alas, I have got the key."

"What words?" demanded Iola. "What words of mine, can even from memory produce so sad a tone?" and she looked up in his face with the feelings of her heart, but too plainly written in her eyes.

"You spoke," replied Chartley, "words that have rung in my ear ever since, 'Happy are those who have no ties to bind them!' I now know of what ties you spoke—" and he added, almost vehemently, "Oh that I could rend them, and scatter them to the winds."

"Chartley!" said Iola, pausing for an instant, and then immediately resuming her walk.

"Forgive me!" said Chartley. "I know I am wrong. I know, it is very wrong, even to feel what I feel, and that to speak it is worse—Forgive me."

"There is nothing to forgive," replied Iola, in a very low tone. "You have done no wrong, that I know of."

"Oh yes, I have," answered Chartley. "I have agitated and alarmed you by my rash words. You tremble, even now."

"Every wind will move a willow," answered Iola. "If I tremble, Chartley, it is not from what you think; but, I say you have done no wrong, and I mean it."

"What, not to acknowledge love to the wife of another?" said Chartley.

"I, I, his wife!" said Iola, with a start. "No, no, I am not, and never will be. The sin were, if I vowed to love where I cannot love, if I promised what cannot be performed;" and, casting her eyes to the ground again, she clasped her hands together, and walked on by his side in silence.

"What then," said Chartley, after a moment's thought, "has not the church's sanction of your contract been pronounced?"

She remained silent for about a minute, ere she answered; and the many changes which passed over her beautiful countenance, during that short space, are impossible to describe.

Then she looked up again, with one of those bright and glorious looks, in which a happy spirit seems to speak out, triumphing over dark thoughts or memories; but, still there were drops in her eyes.

"Hear what there exists," she said. "I had little knowledge of it myself, till I came here; but, this I now learn, is all. There is a cold parchment, contracting in marriage, one Iola St. Leger to one Arnold Lord Fulmer. To it are signed the names of Calverly, Talbot, Bouchier, Savage, and other peers and gentlemen, having some guardianship over, or interest in those two persons mentioned. But, above all," she added, with a faint smile and a rueful shake of the head, "are two crosses, somewhat crooked, shaken, and unseemly; for in truth, I think our little hands must have been guided in the making of them, which, as at the side it is testified in clerkly hand, are the signatures of Arnold Lord Fulmer, and Iola St. Leger—This is all, Lord Chartley."

"Then you are mine," said Chartley, in a

low, deep, eager tone; "then you are mine. Tell me not of obstacles, think me not over bold. Iola would never have uttered what she has, had her heart not been ready to say, Yea; and as for obstacles, I will devour them like a flame."

Iola now trembled more than before.

"Hush, hush!" she said, "Do not speak so vehemently, you frighten me, Chartley. I must beseech you to do nothing rashly. Say nothing to any one at present—Nay, not a word. I must entreat, I must beg ——" and resuming in a degree, her gay tone, she added; "more, I must command, that you interfere not in the least. You are my servant, are you not? Well then, servant, I order you to take no part in this whatever. Fear nothing, Chartley. Light as I seem, gay as I am, gentle as I would fain be to all, I can be as firm as iron, where I am sure I have right on my side, as I am sure here. I cannot love him. I will not marry him; but the refusal must

come from my own lips, and not be spoken by another."

"But, they may find means to overbear your will," said Chartley, "unless you have some support—aye, and that support, a strong arm, a stout heart, and powerful means."

"Should the time ever come, when I need it," said Iola, "you shall have instant notice."

"But they may force you into a convent," said Chartley. "That, I believe, is within their power to do. At least, I have heard of several instances where it has been done."

"They would find it difficult with me," replied Iola. "They might force me into a prison, it is true; but vows against my conscience, I will never take, to mortal man, or to the altar. One thing perhaps, they can do; for of that, I know little. They may take from me these broad lands, and the goodly heritage, which my father possessed and forfeited. I am reputed to be their heiress; but doubtless my uncle can take them from me, if I obstinately oppose his will."

"That is not worth a thought," answered Chartley. "Wealth has undoubtedly its value, my Iola; but it is not happiness, and only a small ingredient therein. Let us speak of things of more importance. I cannot but fear you calculate too much upon your strength, your courage, and your power of resistance. But leave the matter to me, and I will contrive to cut the gordion knot of all difficulties, in a very short space of time. There is a plan before my eyes, even now, which could hardly fail us."

"Would you cut that knot like the Macedonian, with your sword?" said Iola, gazing at him with a meaning look. "No, Chartley, that must not be. If you love me as you say, you will not attempt it. Nay, more, you will trust to me, and to the promise which I make, to call upon you at once, in the moment of need, whenever that moment comes."

"But I may be absent—You may have no means," replied Chartley.

"Ah I have means and messengers that

you know not of," answered Iola, gaily, "fairies that will fly like swallows with my messages, elves of the green wood that will track you for me through their darkest bowers—Nay, I am serious, Chartley. What would you think if I were to tell you that even in the midnight, with doors all bolted, barred, and locked, the keys lying by the heavy porter's head, and all the warders snoring in their beds, I can pass forth from this castle, and sport upon the lawns and slopes around, as if it had no walls—nay, that I have done it."

"Then you are a fairy yourself," answered Chartley, "as I have been half inclined to think ere now. But I have your promise, your solemn promise, that nothing shall ever force you to this detested marriage, and that you will send to me, or give me notice, the moment that my aid is needful—and not delay too long."

"I will," she answered, emphatically. "Methinks you would not find it perhaps to guard me once more through the green forest, as you did

one night we both remember; and should it be needful, Chartley, so to do, I will then trust as implicitly to your honour as I did before; for Iola will be wholly at your mercy. But I must have promise for promise, and vow for vow. You must assure me that, whatever you see, whatever you hear, you will remain quiescent, and leave the whole decision to myself."

"Then if that youth returns," answered Chartley, "I must shut myself up in my dull tower, and make myself a prisoner indeed."

Iola smiled, saying in a low tone—

"It might perhaps be better—if Chartley cannot rule Chartley. But happily there is no chance of my being pressed on this sad subjects for weeks or months to come, as I learn from Constance that the king has refused to give an immediate consent; for which I could almost say, Heaven bless him."

"That is happy news indeed," answered Chartley; "and yet, Iola, I could wish that if a

struggle is to be .de, it might be soon made; for nothing is sc inful as uncertainty."

"All men are .ike in that, I see," replied Iola; "we women love to put off the evil day."

"It may indeed, in this instance, be as well," answered Chartley, "for it gives time for preparation; and that I will commence at once."

"Preparation for what?" demanded Iola in some surprise.

"For any thing that may occur," replied Chartley; "but for one thing we must both be prepared, sweet Iola—for flight—ay, flight to distant lands, love; for think not, that if we venture to unite our fate by the dearest and the holiest rite, against the consent of your family, in defiance of their contract, and without the king's permission, this land will be safe for us thenceforward. Richard is well fitted to find a treason in such acts; and, if he cannot part you from your husband, to take your husband's head. My preparation therefore must be, not only to secure a refuge in another land, but to provide means there, to keep us from po-

verty or dependence. Bu[illegible]at will be easily accomplished. Will you r[illegible]et it Iola? Will you shrink from it—to p[illegible]s some few years with Chartley on a foreign shore, and leave this fair land and all the memories of home behind you?"

"No, oh no!" she answered; "I will neither shrink nor regret. My home will ever be with my heart-" she paused, and the crimson spread gently over her cheek, as she felt how much her words implied. Her eyes too, sunk under the warm, and tender, and grateful gaze which was bent upon her; but the next moment she asked, in her low sweet tones—"Will you never regret Chartley? Will you never think that you have paid for Iola's hand too dear a price, when memory turns back to your native land, high station, wealth, ambition, all sacrificed for her?"

"Never," answered Chartley; "were it to cost me all, and leave us but a cabin and bare food, I would not hesitate now, or regret hereafter. I do but change dross for a jewel of

inestimable price, and I will value it ever as I do now."

They were both silent for several minutes; and then, as they turned the north western angle of the walls, they saw the sun setting in the splendour of scattered clouds, and Constance and Sir William Arden advancing towards them. Iola perceived that her cousin's step wanted its quiet steadiness; and when her eye fixed on her face, a blush rose in Constance's cheek.

"There is the sun setting and your uncle rising, lady," said Sir William Arden in a gay voice, pointing with his hand in the direction of the road across the park, upon which several horsemen might be seen advancing—"we shall soon have the light of his countenance, though the star goes down."

"Let us go in," said Iola in a hurried tone, "perhaps we have already staid out too long; but the evening has been so beautiful."

"And the conversation so sweet," said Arden, almost in a whisper to Constance, "so should close the phrase both with Chartley and

with me, if I had aught of the court in my nature. I will study, dear lady—I will study, and rub off the rust which has gathered between my armour and my skin."

"No — Be ever what you are," answered Constance.

CHAPTER II.

Another day elapsed, and another. The sunshine mingled with the shade, as is ever the case in human life; but there were no dark clouds. Sometimes, for many hours, Chartley and Iola could obtain not a single moment for private intercourse. At others, a whole, sweet hour was won from the great adversary of love, the world. Lord Calverly perceived not, or did not seem to perceive, that anything was changed; and the lady abbess set off to rejoin her nuns, as ignorant of the secrets of Iola's heart as she had come. Thus wore away the

second day, till towards nightfall, when the whole party of the castle returned from their evening ride, and entered the great court. The porter did not venture to stop his lord's horse, as he passed the archway; but he followed him into the court, with a quick step, saying aloud—

"Lord Fulmer is returned, my lord, and wishes to speak with your lordship instantly. He is in the little hall."

The old nobleman dismounted from his horse, and leaving Iola and Constance to the care of the rest, hurried up the manifold steps which led to the door.

Chartley's cheek flushed, as he heard the words the porter spoke; but, as he stood by Iola's side, assisting her to dismount, she said in a low but earnest tone—

"Chartley, to your tower, till you can command yourself—I beseech—I entreat you—if you love me."

Chartley bowed his head in sign of acquiescence; and, not considering that Lord Ful-

mer could not know all that had passed between Iola and himself, since his departure, he consoled himself with the thought, "If this lord keeps the spirit which he has hitherto displayed, he will soon seek me in my chamber."

Thus thinking, he turned away to the apartments assigned to him, while Iola, Constance, and Sir William Arden entered the main body of the building. The latter, however, seeing Iola take her cousin's arm, and whisper something in her ear, tarried in the great hall, while the two fair girls ascended the stairs.

The words of Iola to her cousin were—"Come with me, Constance. Something tells me in my heart that the hour of trial is coming. Let me meet it at once, before my spirit sinks with anticipation. But I must have something to lean on, dear cousin. You be my support."

They walked on, till they reached the door of the little hall; and it was not climbing the steps of the stairs, though they were many, that made Iola's breath come short and quick.

It was the beating of the anxious heart. She opened the door at once, however, and went in. Her uncle and Lord Fulmer were standing together at some distance on the right of the door in earnest conversation; and, as soon as Iola and her cousin entered, Lord Calverly retreated towards the oriel window, saying to his companion—

"Come hither, come hither."

But Iola would not give up the ground; and, though she walked to the other end of the hall, she remained in the room. She turned an anxious and eager gaze towards her uncle and Lord Fulmer however, and whispered to Constance—"I knew it—see how eagerly they speak."

They spoke so long that the suspense was very painful; but, at length, they turned, as if to come towards the two ladies; and Lord Fulmer said aloud—

"Upon my honour and my faith, not a word shall be uttered without your permission;" and

then they advanced with a quick step, Lord Calverly only saying in reply—

"So be it then."

Iola gazed at them in the dim light, for the sun was by this time down; and her hand clasped tight upon her cousin's arm—

"Now, God help me," she murmured.

"Iola, my dear niece," said Lord Calverly, approaching, "I have a communication to make to you, which will take you somewhat by surprise; but you have received an education which will make you always submit to duty, I am sure, unmurmuring. This noble lord here, has just informed me of circumstances, which render it absolutely necessary, that we should pass over all preliminaries, and that you should give him your hand immediately, according to the contract entered into long ago."

Iola gasped, and tried to answer; but her voice failed her; and Lord Calverly went on to say—

"It is somewhat sudden in verity and truth;

but he must depart for Dorset by daybreak to-morrow ; and therefore the marriage ceremony must be performed to-night. The priest will be ready in the chapel at ten, and—"

"Impossible!" said Iola, in a firm and almost indignant tone ; for this was worse than she had expected ; and it roused her anger. "What, two hours' notice to prepare for the most important step of all a woman's life! And does this noble lord think to conciliate affection, or to win esteem, by such indecent haste, by such a rude insult to all the feelings of my heart?"

"What feelings?" demanded Lord Calverly, sharply. "I see, my lord, it is as you thought. Hark you, lady, I am not a man to be trifled with. I have ruled my own household well and steadily ; and, please God, I will rule you too. No one has ever been suffered to disobey me ; and you shall not be the first—Go and prepare—What ho, without there?" he continued, turning to the door ; and a servant running up, he said—"Bring lights here. Where is Lord Chartley?"

"Gone to his apartments, noble lord," replied the man.

"Set a guard at his door," said Lord Calverly. "Let his servants pass in and out, but not himself."

Then turning again to Iola, with an angry tone, he said—

"Marry! The feelings of your heart! We begin to understand them, niece. What have the feelings of your heart to do with a contract of marriage, already signed and sealed?"

"Every thing," replied Iola; "in as far as upon them depends whether I will or will not fulfil a contract entered into without my consent, and which therefore cannot be binding on me."

"Idle nonsense," cried Lord Calverly; "you know little of the law of the land, my learned gentlewoman. God's my life! We shall soon have chits out of a nunnery-school setting up for chief justices. The contract was entered into by your guardians on your behalf, and is binding upon you by law."

"Then let him appeal to the law to enforce it," said Iola; "for by my act and my will, it shall never be fulfilled."

"Nay, nay, my dear uncle," said Constance, "you are too harsh with her. Think, what a surprise this must be, when you yourself told me that the king had not yet given his consent to the marriage, and that it must be put off for a month or two, till he and the queen could be present. Of course, she marvels at this sudden change; for I told her exactly what you told me."

"More fool you, wench," answered her uncle, who was irritated beyond measure, at the first opposition he had ever met with, from one whom he conceived to be dependent on himself. "Circumstances have changed; and now we must pass over royal consents, and all such trifling matters. She is a disobedient hussey, and shall bow her pride to my will this very night, or my name is not Calverly—Away to your chamber, madam, and prepare as fast as possible. You have two hours to think. So

make your mind up, as best you may, to yield obedience, or you will find I will force you."

Lord Fulmer had stood during this conversation, which was so rapid as hardly to admit of interruption, in no very enviable state of mind, and with looks by no means calm or dignified. He had thought himself firmer and sterner than he really was; and now he hesitated and regretted.

"Stay, stay, my lord," he said. "Iola, let me beseech you—dear lady, let me plead."

"Hush, my lord," answered Iola, giving him a cold and shuddering look. "Your cause has been put upon its proper footing, force. My noble uncle, prompted by you, speaks the first feelings of your heart. No after thought can now avail. You and he may drag me to the altar —You and he may cause a vain ceremony to be performed, turn a deaf ear to my rejection of the vows tendered me, and commit what violence you will. But you cannot make me your wife; for that depends upon myself; and the words which would constitute me such,

shall never be uttered by these lips in favour of a man whom I never loved, and whom I now scorn."

"This is all vain," exclaimed Lord Calverly, his rage only increasing. "Argue not with her, my lord; she will learn her duty when she is your wife. This very night—aye, as the clock strikes ten, the ceremony shall be performed in the chapel of the castle, whether she will or not; and, once that sacrament received, the union is indissoluble. My chaplain will administer it. He will have no scruples to obey my commands, when I show him the contract. Away to your chamber, disobedient wench, and be ready to perform what you cannot refuse."

With a slow step, and still leaning on her cousin's arm, Iola quitted the hall, mounted a few steps near the hall door, passed through the long corridor which ran round that side of the castle, and then turned into the passage, leading to her own chamber. Constance marvelled that she trembled not; but Iola's step

was firm and light, though somewhat slow. She opened the door of the ante-room, and looked in; but there was no one there; and it was dark and vacant.

"What will you do, dear Iola? How can I help you?"

"No way, dear Constance," replied her cousin, "but by giving me an hour for calm thought. Keep my girl, Susan, away from me. Tell her, I want no lights for an hour, and only wish to think."

"But what will you do?" asked Constance.

"Not marry him," replied Iola; "no, not if he had an emperor's crown to lay at my feet. Does he think this the way to win a woman's heart?—Leave me, leave me, dear Constance! Come again in an hour. By that time my resolution will be taken—" and, as Constance turned sadly away and closed the door, Iola added, in a low voice to herself, "and executed."

Slowly and thoughtfully Constance trod her way back towards the lesser hall, pausing more than once, as if to consider some plan. When

she entered, the sconces were lighted, and her uncle and Lord Fulmer were standing under one of them at some distance, still talking loud and eagerly.

"Nonsense, nonsense," cried Lord Calverly. "This is now my business. She will disobey my commands, will she? She shall be taught better—" Then, seeing Constance, he raised his voice, as if he had not been speaking loud enough before, exclaiming, "Where have you left that little rebel, Constance?"

"In her chamber, my lord," replied Constance, in a sad tone.

"'Twere better you stayed for her," said her uncle.

"She sent me away my lord," replied Constance, "refusing all consolation."

"Well, well, let her sulk," answered the old nobleman. "We care not for sullenness, so we have obedience.—The storm will work itself clear, my lord, never fear;" and he resumed his conversation with Fulmer.

In the mean time, Constance glided out of

the other door, and sought a small room where the women servants of the castle were accustomed to work in the evening. She found her own maid there, but not Iola's girl, Susan; and, sending the former, to give her cousin's message, Constance proceeded through the lower passages of the house, and under the lesser hall, to the great hall below. It was now fully lighted; but she found Sir William Arden still there walking up and down with a slow step, and his arms crossed upon his chest.

"I am very glad I have found you," said Constance, approaching him, with an eager and confiding look. "I have something to tell you."

"I thought so, dear lady," replied the knight. "I thought so, as soon as I heard of this young lord's return; and so I waited here, to see if I could help. What is it? Two or three men came in, a few minutes ago, and took down some partizans from the wall. What may that mean?"

"That they have set a guard at Lord Chartley's door," answered Constance; "and that

my uncle vows he will compel Iola to give her hand to Lord Fulmer at ten to-night."

"A guard at Chartley's door," exclaimed Arden. "Then something must be done indeed. We must consult, dear lady; but let us seek some more private place than this. You are not afraid to go with me?"

"Oh no," answered Constance, giving him her hand; "you persuaded me to tell you so the other day. But come into the passage behind the hall. Few pass that way, I believe; and we can speak freely there."

Thus saying, she led him to the farther end of the wide vaulted chamber, and thence, through a low browed door, into a small narrow passage, where a single lamp was twinkling. They both paused near the door; and Constance then said, "what is to be done? You told me you would help me on any occasion if you could. Now is the moment, my noble friend."

"And so I will," answered Arden, frankly; "aye, if it should cost my heart's blood. But let me hear the whole. I will interrogate you

in order, my sweet witness. You say they have stationed a guard at Chartley's door, and declare they will force Iola to marry this moody boy at ten to night. They must have discovered all that we have fancied between her and Chartley. Is it not so?"

"I can reach no other conclusion," answered Constance.

"Then, where is your fair cousin?" asked Arden.

"In her own chamber," replied Constance; "whence my uncle threatens to drag her down at the hour named, and force her to marry a man whom she abhors."

"It has been done before now," said Arden, setting his teeth close. "What does your cousin propose to do?"

"I know not," answered Constance. "She sent me away that she might think alone. She will refuse to the last, of that I am sure; and she will have strength to do it firmly too; for her courage is far greater than I ever dreamt it would be."

"Think you the chaplain will perform the

ceremony if she does refuse?" asked Arden, in a meditative tone.

"I fear so," answered Constance. "He is a mere creature of my uncle's, and, as you have seen, fat, sleek, and pliable, considering venison, and capon, and Gascon wine, much more than the service of the altar, or the conscience of his penitents."

"Then we must contrive to give your cousin some support in her resistance," said Arden, gravely. "It must be done; for she shall not be sacrificed, if I were to cleave Lord Fulmer to the chine with my own hand. But upon my life, it is dangerous; for, if the king has given his consent, and we stop it with the strong hand, we shall have the wild boar upon us, and he is a savage beast."

"But his consent is not given," exclaimed Constance, eagerly. "That my uncle admitted, and said they would do without. From some words too, I gathered, that the marriage is to be concealed when it has taken place."

"So, so, then our course is clear enough,"

answered Arden. "We will take the king's part! Otherwise, dear Constance, I must have asked you to make up a little packet of plain clothes, and jump up *en croupe* behind your knight, and away with him to Britanny, as ladies did in days of old, if tales of knight errantry are true. Upon my life it would be no bad plan."

"Nay, nay," said Constance, "speak seriously, Arden; for my heart is very full of poor Iola just now."

"But one little corner left for me," answered Arden; and then more seriously he added, "Well well, I will stop this marriage. Fear not; we must begin soon, however; for it will not do to have strife in the chapel."

"There will not be bloodshed," said Constance, with a look of terror.

"Oh no, I trust not," replied Arden. "That which requires secrecy is soon given up, when men find it must be made public. The king's name will, I doubt not, be sufficient; but we must take means to prevent anything like re-

sistance being offered. How many men are there in the castle, do you know ?"

"There were thirty-five," answered Constance, "so my maid told me; but three of those who came from the abbey with us, and ten of my uncle's men went well armed, to guard my aunt back, and have not yet returned. Some too, are cooks and kitchen men."

"We are ten," said Arden, musing. "That is quite enough ; but yet we must have recourse to stratagem, in order to make sure that no rash opposition brings on violence. Leave it to me, dear Constance, leave it to me. You go to your own little chamber, say your prayers, and when your hour is expired, go to your pretty cousin and tell her, old William Arden says, that they shall not marry her to any one against her will. So let her keep a good heart, be firm, and fear not."

"Had I not better go and tell her now," said Constance, eager to relieve her cousin's anxiety.

"What, little soldier, not obey your general's

orders," exclaimed Arden, laughing. "No no, we can do nothing yet, till the time comes near; for I suppose you would not have me tell your uncle, that it was from you my information came. I must see signs of a wedding, before I proceed to stop it. But be content; all shall be prepared; and you be secret, not to let any burst of joy betray that we have concerted measures of deliverance. Now, farewell, dear Constance. Both you and Iola keep quiet above, till all the hurly burly's done; for we shall have hard words going, if nothing harder still, which God forfend."

"Oh, I beseech you, let there be no violence!" said Constance, imploringly.

"No, no, there shall be none," replied Arden. "If they assail not us, we will not assail them. But still women are better out of the way," he added, kissing her hand; "for they scream, you know, Constance, and that makes a noise."

With a faint smile, Constance left him; and turning to the hall he recommenced his walk,

till, at length, Lord Calverly came down, pausing suddenly, when he saw his guest there. The moment after, he called for a servant however, and gave him some orders in a low voice, while Arden turned at the other end of the hall, and in his perambulations approached the place where he stood.

"It has been a lovely day, and promises as fine a night, my lord," said the knight, in the tone of ordinary conversation. "Methinks I will go and take a walk upon the battlements, a cup of wine, and then to bed; for I was stirring early to day."

"Would I could be companion of your walk," replied Lord Calverly, with courteous hypocrisy. "Nothing is pleasanter than a warm moonlight night of summer; but I have dull business to be attended to; and business, you know, Sir William, must supersede pleasure."

"Quite just, my lord, and wise," replied Arden, "as indeed is always what your lordship says. I will away, however, giving you good night. May success attend all honour-

able business, and then slumber bring repose." Thus saying, he turned and left the hall; and the old nobleman called loudly by name for some of his attendants.

CHAPTER III.

Now the reader must remember that a castle of those days, though fallen from the "high estate" of feudal garrison and constant preparation, was a very different place from a modern house, whether in town or country. Grosvenor Square will give no idea of it; and no country mansion, not even with park wall, and lodge, and iron gates, will assist comprehension in the least. Sir William Arden had to traverse a considerable number of round rubble stones, before he found himself standing under the arch by the porter's dwelling.

The man had just given admission or exit to some one; for he was standing at the wicket with the keys in his hand, gazing forth to the westward, although all trace of the sun's setting had disappeared.

Arden cast his eyes towards the south, in which direction Chartley's tower was situated; but it was not visible from the gate; and, satisfied on that point, the good knight turned to the porter, saying, without any preliminary explanation, to point out the person of whom he was about to speak.

"He has gone to the chaplain's house under the hill, has he not?"

"Yes, honourable sir," replied the porter. "But, by my faith, my lord perhaps reckons without his host; for the good priest calculates upon no marriages, baptisms, or burials, to night; and he is just the man to forget that such a case may happen, and lay in a share of ale or Bordeaux, too large to let any other thoughts enter."

"Oh, he will be sober enough to work matri-

mony though he must not undertake it himself," answered Arden. "Ha, ha, ha!"

The porter laughed too, right joyously, saying, "Jack stopped a minute to tell me his errand; and I could not help laughing, to think how suddenly the matter had come on at last."

And, as he spoke, he hung the enormous bunch of heavy keys up by the side of the door, addressing to them the words, "Aye, you are rusty enough to be spared more labour. Nobody will try to get into the castle now-a-days."

"It would be a hard morsel," answered Arden. "But who are those I saw riding up the hill at so much speed?"

"Heaven knows," replied the porter. "There were only two of them; and we shall soon see what they want if they come here. It does those knaves good to make them wait a little. So by your leave, worshipful sir, I will go and finish my supper."

Sir William Arden still stood near the gate; and a minute or two after, a horn without

sounded; and the porter, creeping out of his den once more, came forward to demand, through the little iron grate, who it was that asked admission.

"We must see my Lord Chartley immediately," replied the man. "It is on business of great importance."

"Who are you, and what are you?" demanded the porter; "and who is that old woman in white on horseback? We don't admit any witches here."

These words were addressed to a man bearing the appearance of an ordinary servant, with a badge upon his arm; but the janitor, as he spoke the last words, pointed with his hand to the figure of good Ibn Ayoub, who sat his horse like a statue, while all this was going on, wrapped up in his white shroud-like garments, so that little or nothing of face or person was to be seen.

"I am the lord's slave," said the voice of the Arab, from under the coif-like folds which shrouded his head; "and this is my comrade—

what you call a servant in this land of Giaours. Open and let us through."

"The orders were to admit his servants," said the porter, musing, and turning at the same time partly towards Sir William Arden, as if seeking his counsel.

"Oh, let them in, let them in," said the knight. "Of course, he must have his servants about him.—There can be no wrong in that."

The man immediately undid the bolts and bars, giving admission to the two servants, who bowed low when they saw their master's kinsman under the archway; and Arden, turning with them, walked by their side, directing them to the stables.

"Keep your news safe whatever it is," he said, in a low voice to Ibn Ayoub, "or you may do mischief.—But stay, I will wait for you, till you come out of the stables."

While the two men were taking in their horses, Sir William Arden examined accurately the low range of building used as the ecury or cury, as it was sometimes called at Chidlow.

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It was very extensive, though low, and situated under the wall for protection; but each of the windows, small and high up as they were, were secured by strong iron bars; and there was no means of entrance or exit, but by the large door in the centre, and two smaller ones at the extreme ends, but on the same face.

"Come this way, Ibn Ayoub," said the knight, when the Arab came forth. "I will show you the way to your lord's lodging. Go up to him at once, and beg him to come down to my chamber below, to speak with me on some business of importance. Say, if he meets with obstruction by the way, not to resist, but to return quietly; and I will come to him.—You will have to pass three men with partizans on the stairs, who are keeping watch upon the good lord; and they may perchance refuse to let him go forth."

"Then will I put my knife into them," said Ibn Ayoub.

"Softly, softly, wild son of Ismael. Do no such thing; but quietly mark all that happens;

and then, when your lord is in his room again, come down to me; but tell him he will see me soon." Such were the good knight's last injunctions to the Arab, who then mounted the stairs of the tower; and immediately after, some words in a sharp tone were spoken above. Sir William Arden listened, and then entered his own apartments, which, as I have elsewhere mentioned, were on the lower story. Two of his servants were in waiting in his anteroom, engaged in the very ancient game of mutton bones. A word from their master however soon sent one of them away, and when he returned at the end of five minutes, he brought with him four of Chartley's men. Almost at the same moment, Ibn Ayoub returned, saying with rolling eyes,

"They will not let pass."

"Never mind my friend," replied Arden; "remain here with these good men till my return; and then, be all ready with what weapons you have."

The Arab smiled, well pleased with the name

of weapons, and bared his sinewy arm up to the elbow. At the end of about five minutes, the knight returned, and in a calm and easy tone, ordered three of Chartley's servants to go up to their lord, after which he turned to the rest, saying, " now good fellows, I wish you to understand clearly, what I desire to have done; and I command you in nothing to exceed the orders you receive. There are three men on the stairs, keeping guard upon my cousin and friend, Lord Chartley. This is contrary to the orders of the king, and contrary to an express agreement between Lord Chartley and Lord Calverly. I therefore intend to take those three men, and lock them up in the room above, which looks upon the walls, and to keep them there as long as I think proper. There must be no bloodshed, no violence but what is necessary to force them into that room —You mark me, Ibn Ayoub—The great object is, to avoid all noise, which may attract others to the spot. I am not to be disobeyed in anything, remember. Now, some one jump

upon that table, and strike the roof twice with his sword."

One of the men sprang up, and obeyed the order; and then saying, "Follow!" Arden went out to the foot of the stairs. He ascended a few steps leisurely, and till sound of voices was heard above.

"You cannot pass, my lord," said some one; "our orders are strict."

"My orders to you are, that you get out of the way," said Chartley; "if not take the consequences. In one word, will you move?"

"My lord, it is impossible: you cannot pass;" replied the voice, in a louder and sterner tone; and at the same moment Arden ran rapidly up the steps, followed by his companions, saying, "keep back, Ibn Ayoub. Remember, no violence."

On reaching the little square piece of level flooring, commonly called the landing-place, at Chartley's door, he found three of Lord Calverly's servants with partizans in their hands, in the act of resisting the progress of the young

nobleman and his two servants, who seemed determined to make their way out. Now, of all weapons on earth, the most unwieldy and the least fitted for use in a narrow space, was the ancient partizan. It might have been employed to advantage, indeed, in preventing Arden from mounting a stairs. But the servants were eagerly occupied with Lord Chartley, who was on the same level with themselves, where they had no room to shorten their weapons, so as to bring the spear points to bear against his breast. One of them looked over his shoulder, indeed, at the sound of feet rushing up, but had they turned to oppose the ascent of Sir William Arden and his party, they exposed themselves at once to attack from Chartley and his two servants. Thus, between Scylla and Caribdis, they were overpowered in a moment, and their weapons taken from them.

One of them then thought fit to say, that they had no intention of offending, and that Lord Chartley might pass. But in profound silence they were hurried into a small room, the win-

dows of which looked towards the walls, and not to the court, where the people of the castle were likely to pass. There, the door was locked and barred upon them without any explanation; and Chartley and his friend looked at each other, and laughed.

"Now if you will take my advice," said Sir William, addressing his cousin, "you will stay quietly here and not meddle any more. We have got three of them safe; we must have five or six more; and then we shall be in force enough to deal with the rest in a body."

"Out on it!" exclaimed Chartley. "What, shall I stay here like a singing bird in a cage, while you are busily doing my work for me?"

"Hear me, hear me, Chartley," said Sir William, "and don't be a fool;" and, drawing him away from the men, he said in a low voice, "remember the king may have to deal with this at some time. Now, for me it is all very well; for I act in the king's name, to stop a marriage to which he has not given his consent.

But with you the case is very different, being a prisoner in ward."

"Preach to whom you will, my dear Arden," exclaimed Chartley, "I was not made for sitting still when other men are acting. But I'll be very prudent, on my life. For many reasons, I would not embroil myself with good Lord Calverly, if there be any help for it; and when you deal with him, I'll be your lackey, and wait without, unless I hear I am wanted. In the mean time, however, I must help you to put some of these rats into the rat-trap, and now let us lose no precious moments. Where do you begin? With the porter?"

"No, no," answered Arden. "We must let the priest and the man who is gone for him, pass in first, or we shall have an alarm given. Besides, I want to speak with the priest. So you had better take these men, and secure all the fellows in the stables. There must be several of them there now, tending their lord's horses after the ride; for I will answer for it they all supped first. Remember there are

three doors; and you have nothing to do but lock each of them. Then you have our men, as you say, in a rat-trap. I, in the mean time, will gather together the rest of our own people, and come to you there, after I have seen the priest and locked up the porter, and any of his men that I can get."

On this briefly sketched out plan they acted, Chartley and his attendants securing, without the slightest difficulty, two of Lord Calverly's grooms, and three of Lord Fulmer's, in the stables, without the prisoners even knowing, at first, that they were locked in. In the mean time, Arden passing alone through those parts of the castle in which the servants generally congregated, gathered together two or three of Chartley's men, who had not previously been summoned, sent one of them to call the rest quietly out into the court, and then proceeded towards the porter's lodging, followed at a little distance by two of the men. In crossing the court towards the gateway, he found that he was just in time; for the priest had hastened with rever-

ent diligence to obey Lord Calverly's summons; and he was already half way between the barbican gate and the great door of the hall. Arden stopped him, however, saying, "Ay, good evening, Father, I am glad to see you; for I want to put to you a case of conscience."

"Holy Mary, I cannot stop now, my son," cried the priest; "for I have been summoned by my good lord in haste."

"What, is he ill? Is he dying? Are you going to shrive him?" exclaimed Arden, with affected apprehension, still standing in the priest's way.

"No, no," cried the worthy man, impatiently; "'tis but to marry the Lady Iola to the Lord Fulmer. The hour is ten; and 'tis coming fast."

"Not so, not so," said Arden; "'tis not yet half past nine; and I must have my doubt resolved before you go."

"Then speak it quick," cried the priest, sharply. "You should choose fitter times."

"'Tis but this," said Arden, with a smile.

"If a man see another, about to do a wrong thing, and one which may produce great danger to himself, is it a sin to stop him, even by force?"

"A sin!" exclaimed the priest, with a not very decent interjection, common in those days, but which cannot be admitted here, "no sin at all, but a good work—There, let me pass."

Arden made way and walked on, laughing, to the gate, where he found the porter just entering his own abode, and saying, good night, to one of the servants, who had been sitting with him.

"Why, you have not closed the gates for the night, have you, porter?" said Arden, standing in the door-way of the lodge, so as to oppose the egress of either of the two.

"Yes, indeed, I have, worshipful sir," replied the man.

"Why, the priest will have to go forth," said Arden.

"Not he," cried the porter, with a laugh, which was echoed by the other servant. "After

he has done his function, he'll get as drunk as a fiddler, and sleep on one of the truckle beds. I should not wonder if I had him here knocking for accommodation; but he shall not have it."

As he spoke, he deliberately hung the keys upon a peg, just at the side of the door.

"These are large keys," said Sir William, taking them down, to the man's surprise, and fixing in his own mind upon the one which he supposed to belong to the door of the lodge.

"Yes, they are sir," answered the porter, somewhat gruffly. "Be pleased to give them to me. I never suffer them out of my hands."

"Back, knave! Would you snatch them from me," exclaimed Arden, thrusting him vehemently back; and the next moment he pulled the door to, by the large bowed handle, and applied the key to the lock. It did not prove the right one, however; and he had some difficulty in holding the door close, against the united efforts of the two men in the inside, till he had found one to fit the keyhole.

Chartley's men, however, had been trained to activity and vigilance, in travelling with their lord; and the two who had followed Sir William Arden, seeing a little bustle, and the light from the lodge suddenly shut out, sprang forward to the knight's assistance. The door was then soon locked; and, speaking through it, Sir William Arden said, "Now, saucy porter, I shall keep you there for a couple of hours, for attempting to snatch the keys from me.

The man was heard remonstrating and bellowing in the inside; but, without paying any attention, Sir William hastened back towards the stables, leaving the keys hanging in the doorway of the porter's tower. In the stable court, as it was called, he found Chartley himself, with eight companions; and a brief consultation ensued as to the next step.

"How many have you got under lock and key in the stable?" demanded Arden.

"Five at least," replied Chartley.

"Then there are five in your lodging and at the gate," said Arden. "That makes ten in all.

Allowing five for cooks and stragglers, we are their superior in numbers, and a good deal their superior, I should think, in the use of arms. Now let us go on—Hold back. Let that fellow pass towards the kitchen."

"Had we not better go by the great hall," said Chartley, as soon as one of the servants of the house had crossed the other side of the court. We can secure any men who may be there."

"No, no," said Arden. "Leave all the management to me, I have promised there shall be no bloodshed; and I do not want even to show any force, unless it be needful. Let us go in by the back way, and up to the west of the little hall. By that means we shall cut them off from the chapel; and then, while you wait in the ante-room, to be ready in case of need, I will go in and reason with the good lords."

"But," said Chartley, "suppose they have gone to the chapel already. I see light in the window."

"Then we must follow them," answered

Arden. "But above all things, my good lord, do not show yourself in the affair, if you can help it. You may put yourself in great peril with the king, remember; whereas all that Dickon, as I shall manage it, can say of me is, that I was somewhat too zealous for his service. Do not come forward, at all events, till you hear strife."

"Well, well," answered Chartley; "that I may promise at least. Now on; for there is no time to spare."

Approaching quietly, one of the many small doors, which gave exit from the great mass, of the castle buildings into the courts around, the whole party found before them a staircase, which, strange to say, was broader and more easy of ascent than those communicating with either of the two principal entrances. Treading as softly on the stone steps as possible, they soon reached a wide landing-place, from one side of which ran away a long corridor, passing over part of the staircase, and guarded from it by an open screen of stone-work, while, on

the other side, was a door leading down by ten steps, to the entrance of the chapel; and between the two, appeared another door, opening into a little ante-room, flanking the lesser or upper hall.

Sir William Arden lifted the latch of the ante-chamber door, and opened it gently, when immediately the voice of Lord Calverly was heard, raised to a loud and angry tone, exclaiming, "Get you gone, mistress, and tell her to come down this instant, or I will come and fetch her. Tell not me, that you cannot get admission or an answer. If I come, it shall be to make a way for myself."

"But it is not ten yet, my lord," said the sweet voice of Constance. "You said you would give her till ten."

"What matters five minutes?" cried the old lord, in the same sharp tone. "But we will be to the letter, and so shall she. Let her know, girl, if she is not here, in this hall, by the time the castle clock chimes the last stroke of

ten, I will come to fetch her, and drag her to the altar by the wrists."

Sir William Arden had held up his hand to those who were following him, at the first sounds of the voices speaking; and the whole party paused, some upon the stairs, and a few upon the landing. The next moment, the door of the ante-room opened; and, coming with a slow step, Constance appeared. She gave a slight start at seeing Arden and the rest, where she least expected to meet them; but he quietly laid his finger on his lip, and pointed along the corridor to the stone screen. Constance made a mute gesture, as if deprecating violence, and then passed on with a quickened step.

Arden did not immediately enter the ante-room, but waited till the light foot-fall of Constance had died away; and then, once more giving his directions to his followers, and bestowing another word of caution upon Chartley, he walked straight through the ante-room into the hall. When he entered, Lord Calverly was walking up and down one side of the

long chamber, and Lord Fulmer doing the same in the other. The face of each was grave and moody; and they seemed not very well pleased with each other, or with anything that was taking place around them. Both however, started on seeing Sir William Arden; and, in a tone of bitter civility, Lord Calverly, addressed him, approaching quite close as he did so.

"I had thought, Sir William, you had retired to rest," he said, "and was wishing you tranquil slumbers. Allow me to say, that at the present moment, I and Lord Fulmer are busy with matters of much personal importance."

"Good faith, my lord," replied Sir William Arden, in a light tone, "I heard below that there were jovial things to take place in the castle, and I wish to share in the festivities of my honoured host."

"I know not what you mean, sir," said Lord Calverly, with a cold stare; but Fulmer at once advanced to the knight, saying—

"There is a meaning in your tone, sir, which must be explained. It seems to me, that you are determined to force your uninvited society upon us, at a moment when we desire to be alone."

"Exactly, my good lord," replied Arden. "I am precisely in that very unpleasant predicament. You will see how disagreeable it must be to me; and therefore I trust you will make it as smooth to me as possible."

"Why, marry, what is all this?" exclaimed Lord Calverly.

"If so painful, what brings you here?" demanded Fulmer sternly.

"I will tell you, young man," answered Arden. "I have learned, that it is the intention of this good lord to bestow on you the hand—"

"From whom, from whom?" shouted Lord Calverly.

"From an exceedingly fat priest, amongst others," replied Arden, smiling; "but the news is all over the castle. If your lordship cannot

keep your own secrets, depend upon it, others will not."

"But what affair is this of yours, Sir William?" said Fulmer, with a sneer. "Are you an aspirant to the lady's hand?"

"Not at present," answered Arden. "But the case is this, without farther words, my lords. I find that this marriage is against the lady's will, and that threats are held out to her of using force—"

"Oh, she has made her complaint to you, has she?" said Lord Calverly.

"No, she has not," replied Arden; "but hearing it by accident, and having a great regard for your two lordships, I wished, as a knight and a gentleman of some experience and repute, to remonstrate with you, and show you what danger and disgrace to your fair names, you bring upon yourselves by such proceedings. Proceedings unworthy of English nobleman and Christian men."

He spoke so calmly, and in such a quiet reasoning tone, that neither Fulmer nor Lord Cal-

verly suspected for one moment, that he intended to proceed to any other measure than mere remonstrance. That, they thought bold enough; and Fulmer replied, "We understand from whence your inspiration comes, Sir William; and I only wonder the prompter does not appear himself."

"That I took care of," said Lord Calverly. "I am not one, my young friend, to neglect any precautions. I think I have some experience in dealing with men, and some foresight too, as to all that is likely to occur. It is not easy to catch me sleeping. Now, Sir William Arden, one word for all. I am not inclined to be wanting in hospitality or courtesy, towards a guest; but I must desire to be left to the management of my affairs, without either your presence or your counsel;" and he made a low bow.

Arden paused for a moment, as if in expectation that he would add something more; and the old nobleman, who had with difficulty bridled his anger so far, went on in a tone

far from cool, to say ; "I would lack no courtesy ; but, if you do not go, you must be removed."

"I have but little more to say," replied Arden, with imperturbable coolness, which contrasted somewhat strangely with his vehemence upon minor occasions ; "but that little is important. This marriage must not go forward."

"But I say it must!" exclaimed Lord Calverly, calling down a bitter curse upon his own head, if he did not carry it through ; and then, striding to the door which led to the staircase from the great hall, he shouted aloud, "Ho! Two of you come up here ; here is something unpleasant that must be removed."

Steps were immediately heard running up ; and Arden retreated towards the door by which he had entered, slowly and calmly, but with a smile upon his countenance.

"My good lord," he said ; "you do not know what you do ;" and opening the door of the ante-room, he said aloud, "Here I want some

of you, my friends. Two stand on the landing, and keep that way against all comers."

"Take hold of him and carry him away to his own rooms," exclaimed Lord Calverly, at the same moment, addressing two of his attendants, who had entered; but when he turned and saw the number of armed men pouring in, he stood as one aghast; and Arden whispering to one of his followers, "secure that door," pointing to the one on the opposite side of the hall.

The man to whom he spoke, and two others, darted across, and had reached the middle of the hall, before the servants of the castle seemed to comprehend what was going on.

"Keep the door, keep the door!" cried Lord Fulmer; and they both immediately ran towards it. It was a race which of the parties should reach it first; and indeed, neither won; but, just as the first of the old lord's servants was stretching forth his hand to seize the door, which was partly open, a stout arm applied a blow to the side of his head, which made him stagger back,

and then measure his length upon the floor. The next instant, the door was closed and locked; and Sir William Arden remained the master of both entrances.

"I beg your lordship's pardon," he said, "for taking somewhat decided means to obtain a fair hearing, which it seems, you were not inclined to give me."

"Are we to consider ourselves prisoners, sir?" exclaimed the old nobleman, confounded and dismayed. "If so, I must appeal to the throne against such violence."

"If you, or Lord Fulmer either, can venture to do so, pray do," replied Arden, calmly. "But I too, my lord, am a prudent man, as well as yourself; and, it is difficult to catch me sleeping. I said that this marriage must not go forward; and I now ask you both, my lords, whether you have the king's consent to this proceeding. In a word, whether it was not your intention to act in this business, in direct disobedience to his authority?"

Fulmer gazed down upon the ground, and

bit his lip; but Lord Calverly demanded fiercely—

"Who told you that, sir? I protest against such an interference in any man."

"It matters not, who told me," replied Arden, "Suffice it, that I am well prepared to justify what I do. Now, my lord, after what I have said, you dare not proceed to the act which you were about to commit—an act which would have only led you and Lord Fulmer here, to long imprisonment, if not worse. If you give up all notion of such rashness; if you pledge me your word, that you will make no attempt to carry through this marriage, till the king's full consent has been obtained; and if this noble lord agrees to ride forward immediately upon the errand with which he is charged by the king, I will restore to you the command of your own house, which I have been obliged to take possession of in his grace's service. Moreover, I will refrain from reporting to the king the intended disobedience, which I have been in time to frustrate. If not, I shall feel it my

painful duty to put you both under arrest, and convey you myself to York."

It is hardly possible to describe the sensations produced by these words and the calm and quiet tone in which they were uttered, upon the minds of his two hearers. Lord Calverly was astounded and terrified; for, like almost all very vain and pompous men, he was very easily depressed by difficulties and dangers. It only required to humble his vanity sufficiently, to make it a very submissive and patient quality, however vehement and pugnacious it might be under a slight mortification. To find himself suddenly deprived of all power in his own house, and treated with an air of authority and reproof, by a guest who ventured to back his pretensions by the redoubted name of Richard, was quite sufficient to silence him, although his wrath still swelled and fretted within.

Lord Fulmer for his part, heard the words which had just been spoken, not only in sullen silence, but with much surprise. He well

knew that, hurried on by passion, he had placed himself in a position of very great danger, and that the act of disobedience he had committed, if it reached Richard's ears, was likely to be followed by the ruin of all his hopes, and long imprisonment. But how Sir William Arden had so rapidly received tidings of the commands the king had laid upon him, he could not divine, forgetting entirely that the necessity of his departure on the following morning, had been mentioned to Iola in the presence of Constance. At the same time, he felt that to remain would be ruin, and that resistance was vain. His only hope therefore, was to escape the present danger, trusting that some of the many changing events of the day would afford him better opportunities, or at all events give him the means of revenge.

All Lord Calverly thought of, after he had in some degree mastered his anger and surprise, was how to retract, in as dignified a manner as possible; and he had just begun to reply: "Well, sir, if I am a prisoner in my own house,

I have nothing to do but to submit;" but, the voice of Constance was heard, speaking eagerly to some one without.

A moment or two after, she entered with a face still somewhat pale, and a look of much anxiety, saying :—

"I am sorry to tell you, my lord, that my cousin is not to be found. After knocking for some time at her door, I and her girl Susan, chanced to see the key lying on the table of the ante room; but, we used it only to find her chamber vacant."

"Heaven and earth!" exclaimed Lord Calverly; "this is too much. Where can the foolish child have concealed herself? From the castle she could not go, for the gates were all locked at sunset. Let us search for her immediately."

"Aye, let us search," exclaimed Lord Fulmer, with a look of great anxiety. "If any evil have happened, I shall never forgive myself."

Sir William Arden was somewhat alarmed;

but, although Constance's face expressed anxiety, it struck him there was less terror in it, than might have been expected.

"Ay, noble lord," he said, "we always regret wrong actions, when it is too late; but, before I permit either of you to quit this hall, we must have a clear understanding. Do you accept the conditions I mentioned?"

"Assuredly," replied Lord Calverly; "I must search for this poor child at once."

"And you, Lord Fulmer?" said Arden.

"I do," replied Fulmer, bowing his head.

"Then, I commend you to your horse's back at once," said Arden; "and I will have the honour of waiting upon you to the stables. Otherwise, perchance, you might find neither men nor horses free to serve you."

"This is hard," said Fulmer.

"It may be no better, I fear," replied Arden. "Excuse me, for a moment, my lords, while I speak with the guard without;" and, turning to the men at the door, he added, "Suffer no one to quit the hall, but the lady, till I return."

He was not long absent; but, many had been the questions poured forth in the mean time, upon Constance, who was replying to one of them, when Sir William re-entered the room.

"I cannot even divine, my dear uncle," she said; "she communicated not her intention to me in any shape; and I certainly expected to find her in her own chamber, when I returned at the end of the hour, during which she wished to be left in solitude."

Arden seemed not to notice the words, though he heard them, but informing Lord Fulmer that he was ready to accompany him, prepared to lead the way.

At that moment, however, one of the servants whom Lord Calverly had called into the hall, and, who had of necessity remained there with the rest, remarked, in a dull and sullen voice:—

"There is somebody ringing the great bell at the gate. 'Tis the third time it has rung. The old porter must be sleeping, not to open."

"He has no power," said Sir William Arden. "I have the keys. Go you," he con-

tinued, speaking to one of his own followers—"open the wicket; but, give no admission to any large party. Two or three, you may suffer to enter."

Lord Calverly was apparently about to say something; but the veteran soldier waved his hand to the man, as a signal to depart; and he retired at once, knowing no authority but that of his own master.

During his absence, which lasted some two or three minutes, the whole party stood in unpleasant silence. Lord Calverly, indeed, ventured a word in a low tone to Fulmer, but obtained no reply; and some one came and tried the door on the side of the principal staircase, leading to the great hall; but, it was locked and guarded. The eyes of Constance sought the face of Arden; but neither spoke.

At length the servant returned; but he was not alone. Close upon his steps, came a man dressed as an ordinary post or courier of the court, who gazed round the scene presented to him, in some surprise.

"Which is Sir William Arden?" he said, somewhat to the dismay both of Fulmer and the old lord.

"I am he," replied Arden, advancing with a mind relieved; for, though resolved, at all hazards, to carry through what he had undertaken; yet he had some fear that his first plans might be in a degree, disconcerted by the appearance of the royal messenger.

The post immediately handed him a letter, sealed with the broad seal, and Arden received it as an ordinary occurrence, with admirable command of his countenance.

"By your leave, my lords," he said, and approaching one of the sconces, he opened the paper and read. The cover seemed to contain two other letters, and after having perused his own, he turned towards Lord Calverly, presenting one of them to him, and saying:

"I presume my lord, this is an order to deliver up the ward of my cousin, Lord Chartley, to myself."

But there was more in the epistle to the old

nobleman, and when he read it, his face turned very pale.

"Now sir," said Arden, addressing Lord Fulmer, "I will conduct you to your horse, and then immediately perform the commands of his grace the king."

"In the name of all the saints, my dear child," said Lord Calverly, as soon as Arden and Fulmer had quitted the room; "what is to be done, if we cannot find your cousin?"

"Nay, I know not," answered Constance, "but, I trust we shall find her well and safe, or at all events hear from her, if she should have taken refuge elsewhere. In the midst of all this confusion, it is very possible she may have slipped out of the castle unperceived."

Constance, it would appear, did not choose her means of consolation well; for her words had anything but a soothing effect upon her uncle, who walked up and down for two or three minutes, in a state of great agitation, making sundry addresses to saints and the virgin.

which savoured much more of impatience than piety. At length, returning to his niece's side, as she remained standing in the midst of the room, he whispered:—

"We must find her, we must find her, Constance. This is the most unfortunate cut of all. You don't know what is in this letter;" and he struck it with his fingers. "The king here, tells me to send her back to the abbey immediately, and that, he makes the abbess, my good sister, responsible for her safeguard, till he can decide in the matter of her marriage himself. He must have had some inkling of this rash mad-headed boy's purpose."

"That is unfortunate, indeed," answered Constance, thoughtfully.

"Unfortunate!" exclaimed her uncle. "It is ruin! child. Why, I risk not only imprisonment but confiscation. I cannot comply with the king's commands; nor can I explain to him why I do not comply, without telling him all that has occurred to-night. It is ruin, I tell

you—Here, come aside, that knave of a courier seems listening to us."

"You had better tell Sir William Arden your difficulty," replied Constance, when they had got to the farther end of the hall. "Though his manner is rough and blunt, yet sure I am, he has a kind heart."

"Let us search well for her first," said her uncle. "Perhaps we may find her in the castle after all. I wish the knight would return. What a long time he stays—Hark!" he continued, after a pause of a minute or two. "There is the sound of horses' feet in the courtyard. Now, thank God, Fulmer is gone: a good riddance on my life, for he had well nigh persuaded me to that which might have been my destruction."

Only a short interval took place before Arden returned; and, after giving some orders in a low tone to his own men, he advanced towards Lord Calverly, holding out his hand and saying—

"I beseech you, my good lord, to let all

angry feeling pass away between us. Believe me, I have saved you from a great danger, into which you were persuaded to run, by your regard for the young nobleman, who is just gone, contrary to the dictates of your own wisdom and experience."

Lord Calverly took his hand, and shook it heartily, saying—

"That is very true, Sir William, that is very true. I never liked the business, and was hard to persuade; but, having once decided, of course I could not suffer myself to be thwarted by a mere child—Pray now, let us seek for her.—I am ready, God knows, to obey the king in everything," he added in a loud tone, for the messenger's ears.

"Well, we will seek for her at once," said Arden. "But first let us restore the house to its propriety."

The followers of Chartley and of Arden himself, were dismissed to their several occupations; the servants of Lord Calverly permitted to depart from the hall; the refreshment

of the king's post was provided for; and the search was commenced, Chartley having been called to aid, at the suggestion of his cousin. Every nook and corner of the extensive building was examined; but Iola was not to be found.

CHAPTER IV.

The search was over. It had proved, as I have said, vain; and Lord Calverly was in a state of bewildered confusion of mind, which it was impossible to describe. Obey the king's commands by placing Iola once more in the abbey of St. Clare of Atherston, he could not do. To explain to Richard the cause of his disobedience, was only to accuse himself of a worse fault of the same kind. To frame any excuse, real or false, for his conduct, he knew not how; and his whole anxiety seemed to be, to pursue and overtake the fugitive, wherever she might

have taken refuge. Several of the servants were examined, in order to obtain some clue to the course which she had followed; but no one could afford any. Her waiting woman, Susan, was as much grieved, distressed, and anxious as the rest. The porter declared that he had closed every postern before he was shut into his lodging by Sir William Arden; and at first, the old lord was inclined to suppose, that Iola had taken advantage of the keys having been left in the door, to make her escape, while Arden was remonstrating with him in the hall. But, on the one hand, the porter declared that the keys had never been removed from the place where Arden had left them till they were taken to give admission to the king's messenger; and the man, who had been shut up with him, confirmed the story. They had both watched anxiously, they said, and must have heard the sound of the keys being withdrawn, had such a thing occurred. Sir William's attendant, too, who had given admission to the royal courier, stated that he had found the gates both locked

and barred. The girl, Susan, too, showed that she had remained in her mistress' antechamber for nearly three quarters of an hour immediately before she was missed; and every servant stated positively that they had neither seen the lady, nor any figure, which could have been hers disguised, attempt to pass out of the castle.

"Nothing can, at all events, be done till morning," said Sir William Arden, "and therefore, my good lord, I will wish you good night. Let us take counsel with our pillows."

His suggestion was followed, Chartley accompanying his friend with less anxiety apparent on his countenance than the occasion might perhaps have justified. Before Arden went, he contrived to say a few words to Constance, unheard by the rest; but Constance shook her head, replying, "I know nought, indeed, and can give no information; but yet I am inclined to believe that dear Iola is in no danger, wherever she is. She used to roam far and wide, where I should have been afraid to

venture; and I feel sure she is safe." Then dropping her voice quite to a whisper, she added, "Pray, tell Lord Chartley so."

A few minutes after, Chartley and his friend sat together in the chamber of the former; and Arden eyed him with an enquiring and yet a smiling glance.

"Know you aught of this escapado, Signor Chartley?" he said, at length. "Methinks, you seem not so heart-wrung and fear-stricken as might have been expected, at the unaccountable disappearance of your lady love."

"Nevertheless, I am anxious," replied Chartley, "for I know not where she is, nor what has become of her, any more than the rest. But, at the same time, I have this consolation, that I believe her escape must have been planned, in case of need, long before; for she boasted to me that she could pass through the walls of this castle like a spirit. I therefore argue, that we have every reason to think her safe; and, to tell the truth, I should not much regret her having put herself beyond the power

of her excellent wise uncle, were I not here in ward, and unable to do as I could wish."

"What would you do, if you were out of the old earl's clutches?" demanded Arden, with a smile.

"I would set off by day-break to seek her—" replied Chartley, "by day-break to-morrow morning."

"And having found her?" asked Arden.

Chartley smiled, and looked thoughtfully down on the table, for a moment or two, answering at length, "Don't you think, Arden, that if one going a journey, found a peculiarly beautiful flower growing near his path, he would be inclined to gather it at once, not waiting till he came back again, lest it should be withered or plucked in the mean time. One would not mind a few scratches either, to get at it."

"Come, come, no metaphors," said Arden. "You know, I am dull as to all fanciful things, my good lord, so tell me plainly what you would do?"

"Well then," answered Chartley, "if I found her, as you suppose, I should be strangely tempted to ask her to get upon the back of an ambling mule or light footed Barbary jennet, and make a pilgrimage with me to some shrines of great repute in Britanny or France."

"Hymen's for one of them, I suppose," said Arden, laughing, "ah, Chartley, you are but a pagan after all. But you forget such things might be dangerous. When you came back, your head would be in a tottering condition, or, at the best, your dearly beloved liberty of roaming might be confined within the four walls of a small room."

"I might stay away, till heads were more sure upon men's shoulders, and liberties were not the sport of a tyrant's caprice," replied Chartley, more gravely than was his wont. "This state of things cannot last for ever, Arden. The world is getting sick of it. There are strange rumours abroad. Our poor queen Ann is ill; and men much suspect she will not recover. Few indeed do under the treatment

she is likely to have; and Richard, they say, is very anxious for heirs."

"So, so," cried Arden, "sits the wind there? Why, methought a Chartley would never draw his sword against the house of York."

"Assuredly," replied Chartley, "so long as the lawful heirs of that house sat upon the throne. But there is such a thing, Arden, as two streams mingling—such a thing as two factions, long rivals arrayed in bloody opposition, finding a bond of fellowship, and uniting to overthrow one who has wronged and slaughtered both."

"I have heard something of this," said Arden, thoughtfully. "The rightful heir of York, is Elizabeth of York; and, were such a thing possible, that Harry of Richmond should graft the red rose on the white rose stem, there is many a man beside yourself who would gladly couch a lance in his support."

Chartley gazed at him for a moment thoughtfully, and then answered. "He has sworn it, Arden, in the cathedral church of Rennes. I

know I can trust you; and I tell you he has sworn it. The queen Elizabeth, too, consents, I am informed; and men but wait for the propitious hour."

"You have heard from Richmond!" said Arden, bluffly. "Your Arab brought you letters from the earl."

"No," answered Chartley; "but I have heard from Oxford. He is already in arms in Picardy; and Calais had better close fast her gates."

"Well, well," said Arden. "Love and war, 'tis strange how well these two, dissimilar dogs, hunt in couples. We were talking of love just now, and lo, she runs straight up to the side of war. So if you were free, you would ride off with this sweet pretty Iola, and wait for better times, tending hens and sowing turnips round a cottage door. Upon my life, I see no reason why you should not, even as the matter is."

"But I am in ward," said Chartley. "My pledge has been given to this good old Lord Calverly."

"That is all at an end," replied Arden, with a smile, drawing some papers from his pocket. "I have kept you all this time in ignorance, to win your secrets from you. But now know, my lord, that you are in ward to me, and not Lord Calverly. Here is the king's letter to me, and there is one from his gentle grace for you, probably announcing the same thing. The truth is, I fancy, this rash Lord Fulmer has let Richard into too many secrets; and the king is determined to keep his hold of the young lover, by delaying his marriage, while he at the same time separates you from her, to ensure that she is not won by a rival. How he happened to fix upon me as your jailer, is a marvel."

While he had thus spoke, Chartley had opened the king's letter, and was reading it eagerly.

"Wrong, Arden, wrong!" he exclaimed with a joyous look, "wrong, and yet right in some things—read, read!"

Arden took the letter and ran over the con-

tents with that sort of rapid, humming tone which render some words distinct, while others are slurred over. Every now and then he added a comment in his own peculiar way, not always in the most polite or reverent language; for those were not times of great refinement, and right names were often applied to things which we now veil both in word and seeming.

"'To our trusty and well beloved'—well, well—so he wrote to Buckingham—'our intentions towards you were more gentle, than the need of example required to be apparent'—doubtless, his intentions are always gentle, but his needs are numerous—'somewhat exceeded in strictness the spirit of our injunctions'—Poor Lord Calverly! mighty strict indeed when he lets his house be mastered by a prisoner and a handful of guests!—'transferred you therefore in ward to your cousin, Sir William Arden, who will better comprehend our intentions. Nor do we purpose here to shut up our benevolence towards you, but to enlarge it according to your merits and services, even in that

which you most desire'—What does the hypocrite mean? He will have your head off ere he has done—'In the mean time, as you incurred displeasure by rashness, so win fair fortune and your heart's content by prudence; for having learned your wishes from a rival and an enemy, we give you an earnest of our good will, in disappointing his desires, with the thought of gratifying yours, according to your deserving, in good season. So commending you to the protection of God, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Paul'—what a number of them!—'we bid you, et cetera.'"

Arden laid down the letter, and fell into deep thought. Chartley spoke to him; but he did not seem to hear. Chartley gazed at him, and laughed in the joyous hopefulness of youth; but Arden took no notice. Chartley shook him by the arm; but his cousin merely said in a sharp tone—

"Let me think, idle boy!—Let me think. Would you be chained to the collar of a boar, to be dragged with him, wallowing through the

blood of the dogs, which will soon be let loose to hunt him to the death ?"

"I know not what you mean," exclaimed the young nobleman ; "have you gone mad, Arden ?"

"It is you who are mad, if you see not the object of this letter," replied Arden. "Hope to you—suspense to Fulmer—both for the same purpose. To keep you his. He holds out a prize to the eyes of both, to be won by a race of services and submissions to himself. Will you enter upon this course, Chartley ? Will you, even for the hand of Iola, become the labouring, straining serf of him who slew your royal master's children, slaughtered innocent babes, spilt the blood of his own house ? See through his artful policy—shut not your eyes to his purpose—calculate the price you must pay for his support of your suit —judge accurately whether, when all is done, the hypocrite will keep the spirit of his promise ; and then choose your path."

"I saw it not in that light," replied Chartley,

at once brought down to a graver mood, "and yet it may be as you say."

"May be? It is!" replied Arden, "by St. Peter, that dear little girl was right and wise, to fly away and not be made a decoy to lead the game into his net! She knew it not indeed; but that matters not. 'Tis well that she is gone. Her fool uncle must be sent to court, to confess his sins and excuse them as he may. It is the best course for him, the best result for us. Time—it is time we want."

"But I want something more, Arden," said Chartley. "I want liberty—freedom to act as I will. Then my course is soon decided. By heaven, I have a thousand minds to rise upon my ward master, bind him, and carry him with me—whither he would be right willing to go, *under compulsion*."

"No, Chartley, no!" answered Arden. "I will not put a colouring upon my actions that they merit not. I will not seem to do by force, that which I am afraid to do with good will and openly."

"Then what will you do? How will you act?" demanded Chartley, somewhat puzzled.

"'Tis a case of difficulty," replied Arden, musing, "I must not accept a charge and then violate a trust; I must not shelter a breach of faith under an equivocation."

"But if you refuse to ward me," answered Chartley, "'tis certain I shall be placed in stricter hands."

"I will not refuse," replied his cousin, "I know this king, and I will accept the ward for a time; but I will write to him and tell him, that it shall be for but one month, as I could never manage you long in my life—which Heaven knows is true enough. If it last longer I renounce it. I know well how it will be. If he sees you tranquil and quiet, he may perhaps let you have full liberty then, thinking that he has power over you by the hope of this fair lady's hand. If not, he will write to me at the month's end, to keep you still in ward, which I will not do for an hour. Meanwhile, we shall have time for all preparations, to find

the lady, and seek both the means of flight and means of living afar. Then, have with you, Chartley, and good fortune speed us both !"

This arrangement was not altogether pleasing to his more ardent and impatient companion.

"But hark you, Arden," he said, long ere the time you speak of, things may have occurred which will require instant decision. Everything is hurrying here to a close; and before a month be over, much may take place which will render it necessary to act at once."

"I do not think it," answered Arden, deliberately. "The march of great events is generally slow. Sometimes indeed, it happens that an earthquake comes and shatters all; but more frequently the changes of the world are like the changes of the year, spring, summer, autumn, winter: cloud, sunshine, wind, rain, thunderstorm, sunshine once more, and then the same course round."

"But I tell you, Arden, Oxford is already in arms," replied Chartley, "and marching to-

wards Calais, to take it from the usurper, that Richmond is promised aid from France, and that troops are already gathering at Rouen."

"Rain drops before the storm," answered Arden; "but, before you can do aught, you must find your sweet lady Iola, gain her consent to your plans, make all your preparations for escape; and this will all take some time, let me tell you."

"What if we find her speedily," said Chartley, "and see, moreover, that she is likely to fall into the king's hands and to be held out, as you yourself have said, as a prize to the most serviceable."

"Good faith, then you must act as you think fit," said Arden. "I shall guard you, and your seven or eight servants with myself and my own three. Richard cannot expect that I should augment my household to pleasure him, in a matter that he puts upon me without my wish. Should need be, you must lay your own plans and execute them. Only let me not know them, at least, till the month is over. But methinks,

my good lord and cousin, your impatience somewhat miscalculates the future. A month is a short time for all I have mentioned."

"Ay, but I go fast," answered Chartley. "To-morrow we will away to seek this fair lady, and never give the search up till we have found her. You despatch this old lord as fast as may be to York; for, if he should stay and find her out, we might have strife or difficulty."

"See how he takes the tone of command already," exclaimed Arden, laughing; "but do you know, Signor Chartley, that I have a strange hankering for this great castle of Chidlow, and do not love to leave it yet. There are others to be served as well as you."

"How so?" demanded Chartley, in surprise, "why should you wish to stay at Chidlow?"

"Because there is a little maiden there, with sweet soft eyes," replied Arden, "who though, God wot, somewhat given to pensive mood, smiles brightly when I talk to her; and, me-

thinks it will not be very easy to tear myself away."

"What, Constance?" exclaimed Chartley. "You, Arden, you! You thinking of love and matrimony! Why, I have given you over to dull celibacy for the last ten years. You were wont to think no eyes so bright as a spear's point, to feel no love for aught but a suit of Milan steel, to warm to the sound of cannon sooner than the lute, and to think the blast of the trumpet sweeter than any lady's tongue. Now, farewell to all hopes of your inheritance! Lack-a-day, what a splendid fortune I have missed by not watching you more closely! and we shall soon have half a score of little Ardens, with round curly heads, playing with your rusty greaves, and calling you, Papa."

"Go on. I am laughter proof," answered Arden. "Let him laugh who wins. Of one thing, at least, I am certain, if she gives me her hand, 'tis with free will and all her heart. No ambition in a case where the bridegroom is a simple knight, no ambition where she does

not know him to possess a single angel in the world, except herself. But tell me, Chartley, where have been your eyes?"

"Looking into Iola's, I fancy," answered Chartley. "'Tis true, I saw you sit and talk with her upon the battlements the other day, and heard you laugh, and saw you smile; but I thought, good sooth, 'twas mere good-nature that kept you lingering behind with Constance, in order that Iola and I might have free leave to pour forth our hearts to each other."

"No, no," answered Arden. "I am very good-natured and generous, I know; but in this instance, like the rest of the world, I was good-natured—with an object. 'Tis true," he continued, in a graver tone, "there is a great difference between her age and mine —some four and twenty years, and I shall wither while she will still bloom. Perhaps you think her too young, Chartley, to be taken as my wife; but I am not yet old enough to adopt her as my daughter; and one or the other she shall be, if she will; for I will not

leave that dear girl to the sad choice of vowing herself to a convent, or remaining dependent upon her foolish uncle's bounty."

Chartley laid his hand affectionately upon his cousin's, saying, "Far from thinking her too young to be your wife, Arden—far from thinking you should not make her such, I believe and trust, that you will find happiness with her, such as you have never known before. I have seen the honeysuckle in the woods, twining itself sweetly round the trees. It chooses generally a stout and sturdy trunk, of mature growth, and there it winds itself up, loading the strong branches with its nectar-dropping blossoms. Sometimes, however, I have seen it climb up a light sapling, till they mingled leaves and flowers together, in one heavy mass; but then, there being no steadiness in either, they have been blown to and fro with every wind, till a fiercer blast of the tempest has broken or rooted up the frail prop; and the honey-suckle has been laid low with that it clung to."

"Well, I have no cause to make the objection if she do not," answered Arden. "She has wound herself round my heart, I know not how; but I have concealed nothing from her. She knows my birth-day as well as I do myself; and she says she does not care a groat" —Chartley smiled—"no, not exactly a groat," continued Arden, "but what she said, was this, that when one loved any body, the heart never stopped to ask, whether he was rich or poor, old or young: that where calculation entered, love was not. Upon my life, I believe what she said is true; for I know, I began to make love to her without any calculation at all, and not much thinking of what I was about—Is that the usual way, Chartley?"

"Precisely!" answered his cousin.

"Well then, let us go to bed," said Arden; "for I shall rouse this old lord by cock crow, and send him off, as soon as I can, to York."

CHAPTER V.

To write a really good play, is undoubtedly a much more difficult thing, and the achievement a much more glorious one, than to write a good romance; and yet the dramatist has some very great advantages over the romance writer. He is conventionally permitted to skip over all dull details, which the romance writer is obliged to furnish. The prominent points alone, are those with which he deals; the burden of the rest is cast upon nimble footed imagination, who, supplies in a moment, from her own inexhaustible stores, all that is requisite to complete the tale,

with much richer and more brilliant materials than pen or tongue can afford. If some reference to events going on at a distance from the scene, be necessary in words, they may be as brief as the writer wills; and, all that is needful to describe the approach of dangers, which have been long preparing, and the effect upon him to whom the tale is told, is comprised in two brief sentences :

> *Stanley*—Richmond is on the seas.
>
> *King Richard*—There let him sink—and be the seas on him,
> White-livered runagate!

This is quite enough; and, although I have heard the admirable critics object to the conceit approaching to a pun, expressed in the second line, as unnatural, when placed in the mouth of a man agitated by violent passions, as in the case of Richard; yet that man must have been a very poor observer of human nature, who does not know that the expression of strong passion is full of conceits. It seems, as if ordinary words and ordinary forms fail before the

energies of passion, and that recourse is had to language often obscure, often extravagant, sometimes ludicrous, and always full of conceits.

However that may be, it is needful for me to give somewhat more at length, the course of events which Shakespeare summed up but briefly. I will be rapid too, and, pretend in this short chapter, to give but a sketch of events, which took several months in action.

Weary men sleep not always sound; and, in less than four hours after, the earl of Richmond had laid his head upon his pillow at Angers, he again came forth from his chamber, and went down to that large public room, which in those days, and for many years after, was to be found in every inn, both in France and England. When he entered, the room was tenanted by only one person, for the dinner hour was passed; but that person advanced to meet him at once, with a low reverence. Ha, Sir Christopher Urswick," said the earl; "right glad am I to see you. The passport you ob-

tained for me from the court of France, served me right well this morning at the city gates. By my faith, the pursuers were close upon my heels. But why did you not come yourself?"

"Because I should have been in prison at Nantes by this time, and could serve you better in France," replied Urswick. "There are many of your friends waiting for you, sir, with anxious expectation, at the court of Langeais; and Madame de Beaujeu, the regent of the kingdom, is prepared to receive you as your dignity requires."

"Then, am I expected?" asked Richmond.

"Many things are foreseen, which we can hardly say are expected," answered Urswick; "but all knew, that within a month, you must be either in France or England."

Richmond paused in thought, and then asked: "How far is it hence to Langeais?"

"Barely twenty leagues, my lord," replied the other; an easy ride of two short days."

"And what is now the state of France?"

asked Richmond, fixing his keen inquiring eyes upon him.

"Still, sadly troubled," replied Urswick. "The contest for the guard of the king's person, and the rule of the kingdom still goes on. Orleans, Dunois, and the old constable on the one side, pull hard against Madame de Beaujeu, her husband and the rest of the court on the other; and, there is nothing but cabals, dissensions, and from time to time outbreaks; but the princess has more wit than the whole of France put together; and she will break through all their plots, and confound their intrigues. Still the state is very much troubled; and a new revolt is expected every day."

"Then we can pause, and rest at Angers," said Richmond, gravely. "If I have many friends at the court of France, I have been obliged to leave many at the court of Brittany. Their safety must be considered at once. I will write to the good duke, before I break bread. I pray you, in the mean time, seek me

a trusty messenger—Let him be a Frenchman ; for there might be danger to any other."

Prompt to execute his determinations, the earl at once addressed a letter to the duke of Brittany, explaining the causes of his flight, and pointing out to the weak but amiable prince, the stain which his minister had brought upon his name, by engaging to give up a guest who trusted his hospitality, to a bitter enemy.

He urged not, it is true, the punishment of Landais; but, he entreated that his friends, the companions of his exile, might be permitted to join him in France.

This letter had all the effect he could have desired. Free permission to go or stay, was granted to every Englishman at the Breton court ; and the rage and shame of the duke, at the misuse of his power by Landais, joined with the vehement accusations brought against that upstart minister by the Breton nobles, induced the prince to give him up to justice, reserving to himself indeed, the right to pardon him, if he should be condemned by a court of justice.

The proceedings however, were too speedy for the slow duke. Landais was condemned; and he was hung also, while the signature to his pardon was still wet.

Three days after his arrival at Angers, the earl of Richmond set out for Langeais, and early on the second day reached the gates of that fine old château, in the great saloon of which, may still be seen the sculptured memorials of joys and ceremonies long past, which ushered in the reign of the active and enterprising Charles VIII. His reception was kind and cordial; but, as Urswick had informed him, trouble still reigned at the court of France; and some weeks elapsed before the earl could obtain anything like a promise of assistance from Madame de Beaujeu. Then, however, she engaged to furnish a small and insignificant force, to form merely the nucleus of an army to be raised in England. Two thousand men alone, was all that France offered; but with this insufficient army, Rich-

mond determined to take the field, and named Rouen, where he had many friends, as the meeting place of his troops. The assistance in money was not greater than the assistance in men; and the hard condition of leaving hostages for the payment of all sums advanced, was inforced by the shrewd regent of France, whose whole object and expectation, apparently, was, by stirring up civil wars in England, to prevent Richard from pressing any of those claims which he had against the neighbouring sovereign.

She had to deal indeed, with one, perhaps as shrewd as herself; and, although Richmond could not refuse the demand, he took advantage of it to free himself of a person whose lightness and incapacity rendered him little serviceable as an ally, and whose sincerity and good faith were somewhat more than doubtful. Dorset was easily persuaded to avoid the perils of an enterprise, the result of which no one could foresee, by remaining as one of the host-

ages in Paris, with another gentleman whom the earl felt he could do very well without; and Richmond departed for Rouen, resolved to strike for life or death, a throne or a grave, with whatever means fortune might furnish.

A number of gallant English gentlemen surrounded the future king. But they were in almost all cases without followers, and but scantily provided with money. It was therefore not upon their unaided arms that Richmond could depend for a crown; and, as he rode into the fine old town of Rouen, a shade of despondency came over his countenance, never very bright and cheerful. But at the door of the house which had been prepared for him, he was met by the boy Pierre la Brousse, who had been sent on to announce his coming, and now sprang to hold his stirrup.

"The good bishop is waiting within, my lord," said the boy eagerly, as Richmond dismounted. "He has news for you from England—" and then giving a glance at the earl's face, he added—"Good news, my lord."

"You seem much in his confidence," said Richmond, coldly. "Does he tell you, whether his news is good or bad?"

"His face does," replied the boy. "I watch men's faces."

Richmond smiled and walked on, guided by Pierre to the room where Morton sat. For a moment, the prelate did not seem to hear the opening door, but remained, with the light of the lamp well nigh absorbed by the black ceiling and the dark arras, poring over some papers on the table before him. The next instant, however, he raised his eyes as Richmond advanced, and starting up, exclaimed—

"I beg your pardon, my lord the king, I did not hear you enter."

"The king?" said Richmond. "You forget, good father, I am as yet no king."

"But shall be so within a month," replied Morton, laying his hand on the papers, "if there be but one word true in ten, of all that is written in these letters. But you are weary,

you are thirsty. Let me order some refreshment, while supper is preparing."

"I am weary of disappointments, thirsty for hope," replied Richmond. "Give me your tidings, before I drink or rest. Now, boy, retire;" and he seated himself by the side of the chair which Morton had been occupying.

"This, my lord, from the gallant earl of Northumberland," said Morton, handing him one letter. "See what comfortable assurances he gives of the north."

Richmond read, and looked well satisfied, but said nothing; and then Morton handed him another, saying—

"This from Sir Walter Herbert."

"But poor comfort, that," observed Richmond. "He bids you be assured that whatever appearances he may put on, he will stand neuter. That is cold, right reverend father."

"In some cases, neutrality is better than favour," replied Morton. "Herbert is Richard's right hand in Wales. If his right hand fail

him, his left will serve him but little. Read this from Rice ap Thomas."

"Aye, this is more cheering," exclaimed Richmond, his face brightening. "A thousand men! Why 'tis half the force we bring hence. But think you, reverend friend, that he can keep his word?"

"That he has the will, doubt not," replied the bishop of Ely, "and his power must be shorn indeed, if he double not the number promised. Now mark, my noble prince, what is said by this good Captain Savage—a leader of no mean renown, and a man whose bare word will outweigh the oaths of other men. Listen, 'Wales waits for his coming, as those who watch for the dawn. She feels, he is her son, and will give him the welcome of a parent. Tudor will meet here many kinsmen, more friends than kinsmen, more soldiers than friends, more servants than all; for those will serve him with their hearts and their purses, their prayers and their means, who have not strength

to draw a sword nor power to raise a force. Let him land nowhere but in Wales."

"And so say I," exclaimed Richmond; "my first footsteps upon British shore shall be in the land of my fathers. I will go forth to seek the crown, which is my right, from my own native home; and with such promises as these, such friendship as yours, so good a cause, so base an enemy, I will march on even with my little band, assured of victory, and shame the petty aid of miserly France, by winning gloriously, or leave my bones to pay the miserable debt, and let them go to England to fetch them back. Now, my good lord bishop, for our preparations; for I will not tarry longer by a day than I can help, on this ungenerous soil."

"Nay, my noble prince, take some refreshment," said Morton; "the proper hour for supper has long passed, and I doubt much that you tarried on the road for either food or rest."

"Ha! supper—I had forgot," said Rich-

mond, "well, I suppose, man must eat. So we will sup, and call my brave companions in to aid us. Then will we discuss our after measures, hear all their counsel, and adopt—our own."

CHAPTER VI.

Gaps are sometimes pleasant things. With what interest the eye traces a gap in a deep wood, how it roams up the glade, marking a tree out-standing here, a clump of bushes there, the rounded swell of the turf, the little sinking dell! And now imagination revels in the void, filling up every breach in the line with a continuation of its own, seeing the fancied woodman's hut peeping out from behind this mass of foliage, peopling the coverts with dunn

deer, and raising up forms of lads and lasses to wander through the chequered shade.

I must have a break in the history of those, upon whom the principal interest of the tale has been concentrated, and can only furnish a few brief lines, to guide the reader's imagination aright. We left them in the spring of the year, when skies were soft, though warm, when the shower mingled with the sunshine, when the leaf was in its green infancy upon the branch, and all nature was rejoicing as if filled with the sweet early hopes of youth. It was now summer, ardent summer; the sky was full of golden light, the woods afforded deep shade; the corn was turning yellow on the ground; and the cattle lay in the hot noonday, chewing the cud, under the shadows of the trees. The longed for summer had come. It was fruition.

Lord Calverly had followed the advice he had received, and presented himself to the king to make what excuse he best could. He

dared not indeed tell the whole truth, and merely said, that his niece, unwilling to fulfil the contract with Lord Fulmer, had fled he knew not whither. Richard, however, divined more than he acknowledged; but he dealt leniently with him. There was no fine, no confiscation, no actual imprisonment. He merely required that the old nobleman should remain constantly at the court till his niece reappeared, after having satisfied himself that Lord Chartley was not cognizant of her flight nor aware of her place of refuge.

Suspicion and policy were busy in the king's mind at that hour; for reports reached him, from his numerous spies in France and Brittany, which showed that storms were gathering on the horizon; and signs, not to be mistaken, told him of discontent and disaffection amongst the people of his own land, while phantoms of shadowy conspiracies flitted across the scene before his eyes, and left him in doubt and apprehension of every man. All those whom he

most feared and least trusted he kept at the court under his own eye, believing that the terror of the axe would secure that obedience which he could not obtain from love and zeal.

Lord Fulmer indeed, remained in Dorsetshire, in command of a small body of forces; but he was kept in check, and his fidelity secured by the presence of a much larger power upon the verge of Somerset and Devon, commanded by one in whom Richard could confide. Never failing in dissimulation, the king noticed not in any way what he suspected or what he knew of the young lord's conduct; but every messenger which went to Dorsetshire carried commendations and hopes, and many an expression of regret that the Lady Iola St. Leger had not been found, so that his marriage must be necessarily delayed.

It might be supposed, that if Richard thought precautions so necessary in these instances, he

would have exercised still greater vigilance in the case of Lord Chartley. Such, however, was not the case. The paradoxes of the human mind are part of history; but so common is it for the most jealous, watchful, and suspicious, in every rank and relation of life, to place the utmost confidence in those, who are destined to frustrate all their plans and purposes, and disappoint all their expectations, that it is no marvel even so keen and untrusting a man as Richard should feel no apprehensions, with regard to either Chartley or Arden, though he was hateful to them both, and yet be suspicious of Lord Calverly and Fulmer, who might perchance disobey his orders, and refuse reverence to his authority in matters of small moment, where their own passions were concerned, but who never entertained a thought of abandoning the king's party, to which they had attached themselves from the first. Cunning often overreaches itself, often sees a distant object, and overlooks that lying at its feet.

But there were many circumstances which rendered Richard careless in the case of Chartley. He looked upon him as a rash, heedless, light spirited young man, too open and too frank, either to be sought by, or to seek other conspirators. He had always been firmly attached to the house of York, had been brought up from his youth under its guardianship, had inherited, as it were, animosity to the house of Lancaster, had taken no part with the new nobility, as the relations of Edward's queen were called, and had, in his boyhood, treated with some haughty contumely one of the upstart favourites of the queen's brother, which caused him to be sent from court to travel in foreign lands. These things had not been forgotten by Richard; and he argued—"It is neither with Richmond nor with Dorset, that this gay young lord would intrigue, if he intrigued at all; and, so long as this fair maid of St. Leger remains to be won, I have him sure. 'Tis well she hides herself; for were she

at the court, or in her uncle's house, I might have to decide too soon. I doubt that moody, discontented Fulmer; but of this light spirited youth I am secure."

The month, during which Sir William Arden had agreed to hold his noble cousin in ward, passed away. Richard heard of them travelling here, travelling there, roaming from this village to that, hovering sometimes round Chidlow, sometimes round Atherston, lodging at Tamworth, at Leicester, at Hinckley; and he easily divined that Chartley was seeking eagerly for Iola. The multitude of affairs pressing upon his attention, gave him but little time to think of minor things; and he suffered the period to lapse, without taking any farther precaution for the young lord's custody. It was recalled to his memory some days afterwards by Catesby; and the king mused over the suggestion for some moments; but at length he said in a somewhat doubtful tone—

"No. Let it be. But this girl must be heard of, Catesby. I must know where she is, lest this youth find out the hidden treasure, and snatch at it without our consent. There must be people who know her habits and her haunts. Let them be enquired after, and in the mean time write me a letter to Lord Chartley, requiring him to use every diligence to seek for the Lady Iola, and bring her to the court, when he shall be rewarded as his heart could desire— But mark you, Catesby, mark you. Put in 'If the lady's heart go with it.'—These young fools, we must talk to them about hearts, or they will not believe. Methinks hearts wear out about thirty, Catesby. Is it not so?"

"Sometimes sooner, sire," answered Catesby, gravely. "But I will do your bidding; and methinks the person most likely to know where the lure lies hid, is the lady Constance, her cousin. The old lord sent her back to the abbey of St. Clare; but I will despatch some

one thither, skilled in ladies' interrogatories, who will soon extract from her all that she knows."

"So be it," said the king, and there the conversation dropped.

CHAPTER VII.

It was in the month of July, often a wet and rainy month, in this good climate of England; but the rain had exhausted itself, and sunshine had come back again, bright and clear. The world looked fresh and beautiful, as if a new spring had come; and light and pleasant air tempered the heat of the atmosphere; yet the door of the woodman was shut and bolted; and, in the middle of the summer, a large fire burned upon the hearth. With his leathern jerkin cast off, his powerful and sinewy arm bare, and a heavy hammer in his hand, he

stood by the fire turning from time to time, a piece of iron, which lay amidst the ashes. Then, approaching a sort of moveable anvil, which stood in the midst of the floor, he adjusted upon some plates of iron, fastened closely together by rivets, one of which however was wanting. Next, bringing the red hot iron from the fire, he passed it through the two holes where the lost rivet had been, and with heavy blows of the hammer fastened the whole together, while his large hound stood by and contemplated his proceedings with curious eyes. Then throwing down the iron plates by the side of some others very similar, he took up a bright corslet, grooved and inlaid with gold tracery, and gazed upon it with a thoughtful and a care worn look. Through the hard iron, on the right side, was a hole, of the breadth of three fingers, and all round it, the crimson cloth, which lined the corslet, was stained of a deeper hue.

"Ay, Ban," said the woodman, speaking to the dog, "those are the holes which let life out! How is it to be mended? Nay, I will

let it be—Why should I care? 'Twere a lucky lance that found twice the same entrance;" and he cast down the corslet on the floor.

The dog turned round towards the door, and growled; and the next instant some one raised the latch, and then knocked for admission. In haste, but yet with no agitation, the woodman lifted the various pieces of armour which cumbered the ground, removed them to the inner room, and locked the door. In the mean time the knock was repeated twice or thrice; and the dog bayed loud. The woodman drew the bolts, and threw back the door suddenly; but the only figure which presented itself, was that of Sam, the piper.

"Why, what have you been about, Master Boyd," he said. "You are hammering so loud but now, I could not make you hear."

"Mending my tools," said Boyd, with a grim smile. "But what want you, Sam? Have you brought me any news?"

"Ay, plenty," answered the piper. "First, let me put down my bag, and give me a

draught of beer, if it be but thin penny ale, for I am thirsty, and my mouth is full of dust."

"It has often been full of other things since day-break," said the woodman; "but thou shalt have the beer. Sit you down there, outside the door, and I will bring it you."

The piper sat down on the rude seat at the door; and, while the woodman departed "on hospitable thoughts intent," the hound came and laid its head upon the lap of the wandering musician. But Sam, as curious as any of his class, was seized with a strong desire to see what the woodman had been really doing, and was rising to look in. The moment he attempted to move, however, the dog, though he knew him well, began to growl, and thus kept him there, as if he had been placed on guard, till Boyd's return.

"Well, now for your tidings then," said Boyd, when the man had drunk.

"Which will you have first?" demanded the piper, "news from the court, the castle, or the field?"

"It matters not," said Boyd. "Shake them out of the bag, Sam, as they come."

"Well then, from the court," said Sam. "It should have the place of honour, though there is but little honour in it. Well, the king is mighty wrath to hear that the Earl of Richmond has put to sea with a fleet and army to invade England. He laughed, they say, when he was told thereof; and, when he laughs, 'tis sure that he is angry."

"But is Richmond on the sea?" asked the woodman. "I doubt it."

"Nay, I speak but what men tell me," answered Sam. "They say he is on the sea with a great power. Many men refuse to pay the benevolence too, and declare it is an exaction against the law. All this makes Richard angry; and he rages at trifles like a mad bear, when the dogs have got him by the muzzle."

"He'll need a bear ward, soon," said Boyd; "and he may get one."

"Men say he is insane," continued Sam,

"and that his brain has never been right since his son died at Middleham. However, the queen's funeral was as glorious as could be; and Richard wept a basin full, I am told. But yet men have cried more over a raw onion, and never felt it much at heart."

"Well, well, what is all this to me?" asked Boyd, impatiently. "The queen is dead and buried. God rest her soul! It had little rest here, since she married the murderer of her husband. The king might love her, or might not, may grieve for her, or not. What is all that to me? She was not my wife;" and seating himself on the bench, he bent his eyes thoughtfully upon the ground.

"Well then, my court news is told," said Sam. "Now for my country gossip. Know you, good man Boyd, that the Lord Chartley, whom you and I had to do with a good many months ago, when they burned the houses on the abbey green, is back at Tamworth?"

"Ay, I know," replied Boyd. "He has

been here thrice, hovering about like a fly round a lamp."

"He's a good youth," said the piper. "He promised me one gold angel, and he gave me two. He has a right loving remembrance of that night too; for I never see him but I get a silver remembrance thereof, so I am rich now, Master Boyd. Then, there's his good cousin, Sir William Arden. He hangs fondly about here too, and is, most days, at the grate of the convent."

"Ay, what does he there?" asked Boyd.

"Why, he talks to the Lady Constance by the hour," answered the piper; "and they all say it will be a match, although, if he be not well stricken in years, he has been well stricken in wars. He's a good man too, and bountiful of silver groats; but his hair is getting mottled with gray, so that he is not so good a man as the young lord whose hair is all brown.

Oh, give to me the bonny brown hair,
The teeth so white, and the skin so fair,
The lightsome step, and the dainty air,
Of my sweet Meg of the May.

"No, no. I like Chartley best; and I shall make a fortune by him too, before I've done. 'Tis the first luck that ever befel me; and, I shall open my cap to catch it."

"Then, will you let it all run out in drink?" said Boyd. "But, how may this luck come to you?"

"Why, he has promised me," said the piper, "to fill me a gill stoup with gold pieces, if I can find out for him, where liggs the pretty lass who watched with him in the forest, through one live long night not long ago. The Lady Iola, they call her. I know not if you know such a one, woodman; but, he has asked high and asked low, asked rich and asked poor, and employed all sorts of cunning men to know where the lady is, so that in sheer despair, he has betaken himself to a piper—and the piper is the man for his money, for he has found her out."

The woodman started at his words; and turning upon him with a stern brow, he said—

"And thou hast told him?"

The piper paused for a moment, and then laughed.

"No," he said, at length; "I have not told him yet. I thought that I would first speak with a certain person, who has sometimes odd thoughts of his own, and who, though a rough man at times, has often been kind to me, in days of trouble. When I meddle, I like to know what I am meddling with; and, though I be a poor wretch, who rarely know from one day to another, where I shall get meat, or, what is more important still, where I shall get drink; yet, to say truth, I would rather lose a gill stoup full of gold pieces, than make mischief which I cannot mend—I therefore determined to speak first of all with this person, who knows a good deal of the matter, and who, having hidden, can find—Am I not wise?"

"Thou art better than wise," said the woodman, laying his strong hand upon his shoulder. "Thou art good, as this world goes."

The woodman paused thoughtfully for a few moments, and then said—

"Not yet. You must not tell him yet. There is a task for her to perform, a scene for her to pass through, before there can be daylight—Said'st thou, the earl of Richmond was on the sea?"

"'Tis so confidently reported," replied the other; "notices of great preparation at Harfleur, and of troops collecting at Rouen, have reached the court, and are noised about the city; and the rumour is, that the good earl has sailed, intending to land in Dorsetshire or Devon."

"Then he must fight or fail at once?" said the woodman; "and he must be advised—Yet, doubtless, the tale is false; and at all events, it is too late to stop him—Let me think. To-day is the twenty-eighth of July, is it not?"

"Ay," answered the piper; "'tis so by my calendar."

But the woodman seemed not to hear him, and went on in the same meditating tone, saying—

"It is a memorable day—Ay, it is a me-

morable day—Once more in arms!—Hark, you, my friend, will you be my messenger?"

"What, to the earl of Richmond," cried Sam, with a start.

"Who said the earl of Richmond, fool?" asked Boyd, sternly. "No, to a lady."

"Ay, right willing," answered the piper; "if I judge who the lady is; for she was always kind and good to me."

"Let not your wit run before your knowledge," said the woodman, "or it will leave truth behind. I send you to a lady, whom you have seen, but with whom you never spoke —"

He suddenly broke off, and seemed to let his mind ramble to other things.

"If Richmond has spread the sail," he said, "he may have touched land ere now. But Richard is unprepared. He has no force in the field, no muster called, that I can hear of. There must be an error, and there may yet be time enough—Do you remember a lady, who, with a train of maidens and grooms, passed through the forest several weeks ago?"

"Ay, right well," answered the piper. "She offered at the shrine of St. Clare, looked through all the church, examined the monuments, and read the books where strangers' names are written; and, moreover, she gave bountiful alms, of which I had my share. Then she went to Atherstone, thence to Tamworth, and to many another place besides. She was at the court too."

"And is now gone to Tewksbury," said the woodman. "It is to her, I intend to send you."

"'Tis a far journey, good man Boyd," replied the piper; "and princesses are too high for me. They say she was a princess—You had better send some one, more quick of limbs than I am, and softer of speech."

"I can spare none," replied the woodman; "and 'tis because thou art not fitted to draw a sword or charge a pike, that I send thee. As for speed, thou shalt have means to make four legs supply a cure for thine own lameness. Canst thou ride a horse?"

"Draw a sword or charge a pike!" exclaimed

Sam. "Art thou going to make war, woodman?"

"May not the abbey need defence in these troublous times?" demanded Boyd. "Know you not, that I am bailiff now, as well as head woodman?—Canst thou ride a horse, I say?"

"That can I," answered the man. "In my young days, I rode the wildest. Would I had wild or tame to bear me now, for I hobble painfully."

"Well, then thou shalt have one," said Boyd; "and when thy journey is done, keep him for thy pains. But mark me, thou shalt promise, on thy soul and conscience, to drink nought but water, till thou hast delivered my message ——"

"'Tis a hard oath," said the piper. "I took one like it once before; and I was forced for a fortnight after, to double the pint stoup, to make up for lost time—Well, well, I will take it."

"That is not all," answered Boyd. "Thou shalt promise me moreover, to utter no word

regarding whom the message comes from, neither to mention my name, describe my person, nor tell my abode; but simply to seek that lady, and tell her that the fate of the person for whom she has so long enquired, may still be heard of, and that you can lead her to one who can give her all the tidings she desires."

"And bring her hither?" demanded Sam.

"No," answered the woodman. "First, let me be assured, if you really know where the Lady Iola is. Tell me, how you discovered her, and where—Do not hesitate; for it must be told."

"Nay, I hesitate not," answered the piper, "for thou wert there too: so I can little harm her. One night, as I was passing through the wood which lies between Atherston and Alanstoke—you know the wood right well: not the first coppice, but the bigger wood beyond—I heard a sound, of singing. There were many voices; and, as I love music, I crept up, when in the little glade, beside the stream that

runs into the Tamworth water, I saw some thirty people, men and women too, singing right sweetly. I know not well what songs they were—assuredly not the canticles of the church—but yet they seemed pure and holy; for ever and anon, they praised God's name, and gave him honour and glory. They prayed too, but in the English tongue; and I could not help thinking, it were better if all men did the same in the land. Sure I am, if they did so, they would know better what they say than when they pray in Latin; and, though people, no doubt, would call the meeting, Lollardy, I liked it well. Then, when they parted company, I saw the Lady Iola, for she was one, walk away between two men. One was about your height, good man Boyd. The other, I knew by his long white beard—the good old franklin, Elias Ames. There was a lad followed, to see that no one watched, I fancy; and he seemed to me, wondrous like the son of the gardener at the abbey. But I tricked his vigilance, and followed round by the other path, till I saw the

Lady Iola and the good old franklin go into his pretty wooden house, with the woodbine over the door, while the others went their way. Next morning, soon after day break too, I saw the lady peep forth from the window, through the honeysuckles, looking, to my mind, far sweeter than they."

"Well then," said the woodman, after meditating for a moment; "go to the lady I have mentioned; tell her what I have said, but not who said it; and lead her to that house with as few followers as may be. There she will hear more."

"But how shall I get admittance to her?" demanded Sam. "Why, those knaves, those grooms of hers, will look me all over from head to foot, and then drive me from the door. How should a poor piper get speech of a princess?"

"You shall have the means," answered Boyd. "Wait here for a minute;" and retiring once more into his cottage, he was a short time absent. When he returned, he bore a piece of written paper in hand, and gave it to his messenger,

saying. "There, take that to Sir William Stanley's bailiff at Atherston. He will send you on the way."

"A horse——Believe him," said the piper, reading. "Does that mean he is to believe a horse?"

"No," replied the woodman, gravely, "to believe you, and give you a horse—I knew not that you could read. Now look here," he continued, giving the man a large gold cross, of what is called, the Greek form, set with five Sardonix stones, and attached to two very beautifully wrought chains, terminating in the heads of serpents. It seemed a very ancient workmanship, but was so splendid as greatly to excite the admiration of the poor piper.

"There, cease gazing!" said the woodman; "but take that cross, and put it up carefully, where it will be seen by no one, lest you should be robbed and murdered for its sake. When you meet with the lady's train—you will find her either in Tewksbury or some of the neighbouring villages—ask to speak with her chief

woman. Tell her to take the cross to her mistress, and ask if she will purchase it. There is money for your journey too.—Methinks she will soon see you, when she looks upon that cross."

"But what if she do not?" asked Sam. "What then?"

"Return," replied the woodman, apparently greatly moved; and, without further words, he was re-entering his cottage, when the piper called after him aloud, saying:

"Hark ye, hark ye, yet a minute, Master Boyd. There are two words to the bargain remember. If I undertake your errand, you must not spoil mine."

"Thine, man!" exclaimed the woodman, turning upon him sharply. "What is thine?"

"If I understood you rightly," said Sam with a tone of deference, "you said, or meant to say, that the secret of this dear lady's abode, was not to be told to the young lord as yet, but that it might be told by and bye. Now, I must be the teller; for I made the discovery."

"I understand thee," said the woodman. "Fear not, thou shalt have the gill measure of gold pieces, which is what thou carest about; and no one shall take it from thee. Now, quick upon thy way; for time presses; and events are hurrying forward which admit of no delay."

CHAPTER VIII.

Midsummer days dawn early; and, even in that class of life where it is not customary to pass the greater part of night in study or amusement, it rarely happens that the rising sun finds many ready to rise with him. The hour at which the labours of the abbey garden begun, in summer time, was five o'clock. But long ere that hour had arrived, on an early day of August, the door of one of the cottages on the abbey green was opened, and a stout good looking young man came forth, taking great care to make his exit without

noise. He looked around him too, in the gray twilight; for the air was still thickened with the shades of night. But every window had up its shutters of rude boarding; and he passed along upon his way without fear. His step was light, his countenance frank and good humoured; and, though his clothes were very coarse, they were good and clean, betokening a labourer of the better class. He had soon crossed the green, passed between the houses, which had been left standing at the time of the fire, and those which were in course of reconstruction; and then, following the road down the hill, he reached the bank of the stream, along which the troops had marched when coming to search for doctor Morton. He did not however pursue the road towards Coleshill; but, turning sharp away to the left, along a path through some meadows watered by a small rivulet, he kept, between himself and the abbey, a row of tall osiers, which screened the path from the hamlet. At the distance of about half a mile, was a coppice of some four or

five hundred acres; and from beyond that might be seen, with an interval of two or three undulating fields, a much more extensive wood, though it did not deserve the name of a forest. Towards the edge of the latter, the young man bent his steps, following still the little path, which seemed rarely beaten by the busy tread of men's feet; for the green blades of grass, though somewhat pressed down and crushed, by no means suffered the soil to appear.

Indeed, it was a wild and solitary scene, with just sufficient cultivation visible to render the loneliness more sensible. The young man, however, seemed to know all the paths right well; for though they sometimes branched to the one hand, and sometimes to the other, and sometimes could hardly be traced amongst the grass, yet he walked on steadily, without any doubt or hesitation, and at length entered the wood, near a spot where stood a tall red post.

He had nearly a mile farther to go, after this point was reached; and his course led him through many a wild glade and bowery avenue,

till at length he came to a spot highly cultivated, which seemed to have been reclaimed from the wood. Immediately in front of him, and at the other side of this patch of cultivated ground, was a neat wooden house, of one story in height, but with glass windows, and even two chimneys; great rarities in those days. The whole front was covered with wild honeysuckle, rich in its unceasing blossoms; and every window, as well as the door, looked like a pleasant bower. Approaching with a light step, through a number of rose bushes, which were planted in front of the house, the young man knocked hard at the door with his knuckles; and in a moment after it was opened, and he went in.

He did not see or remark, however, that he had been followed on his track. When he first came forth from the house upon the green, there had been protruded beyond the angle of a new building on the opposite side, a face very nearly black in hue, and surmounted by a turban. It was instantly withdrawn; but when the

young man hurried down towards the stream, a figure, clad almost altogether in white, glided from behind the new houses; and bending almost to the ground, in a position which it would be difficult for European limbs to assume, the swarthy watcher marked with a keen and flashing eye, the course the youth took, and the moment he disappeared behind the osiers, darted down with the speed of lightning, leaped a low enclosure, went straight through the little rivulet, though it was more than knee-deep, and followed it along its course, keeping the opposite bank, to that which was pursued by the person he was watching. When he had come within about ten yards of the end of the row of osiers, he paused, and, bending his head, listened attentively. A footfall met his ear. It was upon soft green turf; but yet he heard it; and he remained perfectly still and motionless for a minute or two, then waded through the rivulet once more, and creeping gently in amongst the willows, gazed eagerly up the side of the hill. The young man's figure was there

before him, at about fifty yards distance; and from that sheltered spot the other watched him nearly to the edge of the wood. As soon as he disappeared, his pursuer crept softly out, and bending low, hurried up to the slope where the figure had been lost to his eyes.

There was a gentle dip in the ground at that point; but when the Arab lifted his head, and gazed around, nothing was to be seen but the green branches of the wood, about a couple of hundred yards in advance, and three small paths, separating a few feet from where he stood, and then leading amongst the trees at points considerably distant from each other. Instantly, however, the Arab knelt down upon the ground, and seemed to examine the grass upon the path, with a keen and searching eye, and on his hands and knees, advanced slowly to where the point of separation came. There he paused, scrutinized that to the right, and that to the left, and then that in the middle, following it on, in the same position, for several yards. Then, starting on his feet, he bounded forward along it like a deer, and en-

tered the wood. There the ground was sandy; and though the little paths were many and intricate, a long line of foot prints guided him on aright till he reached the little cultivated farm, just at the very moment the young man was entering the house.

Drawing back at once, the Arab concealed himself amongst the tangled bushes, and slowly and quietly made an aperture, by pulling off the leaves, so as to have the door of the building full in his sight. Then kneeling down, with his arms crossed upon his chest, he kept his eyes, motionless and hardly winking, upon the front of the house, for well nigh twenty minutes. At the end of that time, the door opened, and the young man came forth again, with what seemed a written paper in his hand; and behind him, the watcher saw a fair and well remembered face. The door was shut immediately again; and Ibn Ayoub bent himself down, till he was completely covered by the bushes. A moment or two after, the son of the abbey gardener, passed by the place

of the Arab's concealment, and as soon as there had been time for him to make some progress on his homeward way, Ibn Ayoub rose and followed slowly.

Some four or five hours later in the day, Chartley sat in the small chamber of an inn, with his head resting upon his hand, and his eyes bent gloomily down. It was not a usual mood with him; but disappointment after disappointment will sink the lightest heart. A man feels a feather no weight, but yet he may be smothered with many.

"There is Arden," he thought, as he heard the sound of horses' feet below; "and he is happy. All consenting, all rejoicing, to think that a fair penniless girl has won the heart of one of the richest and noblest men in England: while I—as careless to the full of money or state as he, am made wretched because this sweet Iola is an heiress. Curse on this wealth! Would there were none of it; we should all be happier then—But am I envious? That is not right—Well, well, I cannot help it. He must

not see it, however—Well Arden, what news? You have of course seen Constance. Has she had any tidings?"

"Yes, as before," said Arden; "a few words found on her table. 'Tell him I am well, and safe,' so ran the writing; 'bid him be of good heart. I will keep my word, and send if there be danger.' That was all; but, it was in her own writing. Methinks Chartley, it were as well to give up this pertinacious search. If you discover her, may it not draw other eyes too upon her place of refuge? The king, depend upon it, has us closely watched."

"I do not think it," answered Chartley; "and besides, how can I feel easy, not knowing in what direction she may need my aid, when she does need it. One mistake might ruin all our hopes. Oh, could I but discover her, Arden, my tongue would soon find words to win her to instant flight, as the only means of safety—as the only means of insuring, that she is not forced into this loathed marriage, and I am not

driven to cut Fulmer's throat or my own.—Ha, Ibn Ayoub, where hast thou been all day?"

"On my lord's business," said the Arab, and was silent again, seating himself quietly on the floor in the corner of the room: a custom which he had, whenever he wished to talk with his master privately. On these occasions, nothing would induce him to speak openly; for, though a slave, Ibn Ayoub had a will of his own and exercised it; and Chartley well knew, that it was in vain to bid him give his tidings, or ask his question in Arden's presence. The good knight, however, soon retired to his own chamber; and Chartley, fixing his eyes upon the Arab, who remained perfectly silent, demanded what he had been doing.

"Seeking that which is lost," replied the slave, rising and standing before his master.

"And hast thou found it?" asked Chartley, with his heart beating; for there was an air of grave importance about the man, from which he, who had known him well for some three or four years, argued a consciousness of success.

"I have, my lord," replied Ibn Ayoub. "Thou once didst pour balm into my wounds, and hold cool water to my thirsty lips. I can now do the same for thee. She whom thou hast lost is found. I heard thee enquiring how it could be, that the lady sent letters to the other lady. From what I had seen, at the castle of the old man, I guessed the secret messenger, tracked him, and saw the lady's face. Now, thou can'st go thither when thou wilt?"

"Did she see thee, Ibn Ayoub?" demanded Chartley, adding in the same breath, "What did she say?"

"She saw me not," replied the Arab. "I was hidden from her sight."

Farther explanations ensued; but, as so often happens with every man in the course of life, the first step thus taken in advance, brought its doubts and difficulties with it. But Chartley was impetuous; and he felt it impossible to refrain. As to telling him the name of the place, where Iola had found refuge, or describing it, so that he himself could judge exactly

where it was, that the Arab could not do; but, he offered to guide his lord thither, whenever he pleased, averring truly that he had noted every step of the way so well, he could make no mistake.

"How far?" demanded Chartley.

"One hour, with fleet horses," answered the man.

"Well then, to-morrow at daybreak, we will set out," replied his master. "Say nought to any one, but have our horses prepared, and we will away with the first ray of dawn."

This course was followed; and, while Arden was still quietly sleeping in his bed, Chartley and the Arab were on their way towards the house of the old franklin, Elias Ames. With the certainty of a dog tracking a deer, Ibn Ayoub led his master along every step of the way which the gardener's son had pursued on the preceding day, except in as much, as he circled round the foot of the little rise on which the abbey stood, and reached the end of the row of osiers, by crossing the meadows. The

whole journey occupied as near as possible an hour; and at the end of that time, Chartley had the franklin's house, and the cultivated land around it, before him.

"There," said Ibn Ayoub, pointing with his hand. "She dwells there."

"Well then," said Chartley, springing to the ground, "lead the horses in amongst the trees, where they cannot be seen. I will give the signal when I come out.—She may be angry," he thought; "but, women little know, I believe, the eager impatience which a man who loves truly, feels to see again the lady of his heart, after a long absence."

Thus saying, he walked along the path, and approached the house. The windows were all closed with their wooden shutters; and he circled it all round, without finding means of entrance.

"It may alarm her, if I rouse the house suddenly," he thought; and, retreating to the edge of the wood again, he remained watching for about half an hour longer. Then the old

man himself and a stout woman servant, came forth from the door, and took down the boards from the windows; and when that was done, the good franklin walked away down a little dell to the right, as if to superintend his own affairs for the day. Chartley waited till he was gone; and by that time the woman had re-entered the house; but he heard, or fancied he heard the tones of a sweet, well known voice speaking to her as she went in. He then crossed the space between, hesitated for a moment, as to whether he should knock at the door or not, but at length laid his hand upon the latch, and opened it without farther ceremony.

The passages in the house formed a cross, dividing it into four equal parts. Before him, all was vacant; and he could see clear through, by a door at the back, into a little orchard behind; but he heard a woman's voice speaking on the left, and now he was sure that she was answered in the tones of Iola. Walking on then, he turned up the passage on that side and saw the woman servant coming forth from

the door of a room. She closed the door suddenly behind her, when she beheld a man in the passage, and demanded sharply what he wanted.

"I wish to speak with the lady in that room," replied Chartley. "When she knows who it is, she will see me, I am sure."

"Nonsense, nonsense, young man," replied the woman. "There is no lady there. That is a store room."

"Then your stores speak, my good woman," answered Chartley; "for I heard a voice which I know right well, talking to you."

"Go away, go away," replied the woman, who, in the dark passage where Chartley stood could not see his dress, or judge of his station. "Go away, or I will call in the men to make you."

"All the men in the neighbourhood, would not make me," answered Chartley, aloud. "At least, not till I see that lady. Tell her it is Lord Chartley. If she bids me go, I will."

The words had scarcely passed his lips, when

the door, through which the woman had just passed, was thrown open, light suddenly streamed into the passage, and Iola herself, ran out, exclaiming: "Chartley is that you. Nay, nay, you are rash indeed. You should not have come."

"But now I have come, you will not bid me go," said Chartley, taking her hand, and kissing it.—He put some restraint upon himself to keep his lips from hers.

"I cannot bid you go at once," answered Iola, bending her eyes down, with the colour rising in her cheek; "but you must go soon, and not return again, unless I send."

"That is hard," answered Chartley; "but still, I shall not feel it so much, now I know where you are, and can hover round the neighbourhood, like a dove over its nest, watching the treasure of its love."

"Nay, Chartley, you are no dove," answered Iola, with a smile. "Open that other door, Catherine, and watch well from the windows that no one approaches. Come in hither, Chartley," she continued, as the woman opened

the door of a room opposite to that from which she had come. "Here is my little hall. No grand reception room, yet sweet and pleasant."

A floor of dried and hard beaten clay, a low roof with all the rafters shown, walls covered with mere whitewash, an unpolished oaken table, and seats of wood, did not make the room seem less bright and sweet to Chartley when Iola was there. She herself was dressed as a mere cottage girl, and doubtless, when the mantle and hood, then worn in the middle and lower ranks of life, were added, an unobserving eye might hardly have recognized her; but she did not look less lovely to the eyes of him who sat beside her.

They were sweet, sweet moments which those two passed together; and, perchance, it were hardly fair to tell all that they said and did. Iola owned that it was sweet to see him once again, after so long a separation and so much anxiety and care; but yet she told him earnestly that he must not come again.

"A few days now," she said, "must deter-

mine everything. There are rumours busy in the land, Chartley, and which reach even my ears, that there will be a fresh struggle for the throne. Let us not call the eyes of the watchful king upon us, nor by any rash act run the risk of falling into his power. I am told that he has spies in every direction—even here; and, I feel by no means sure, that he has not discovered more than we could wish. But one thing is certain, that, if we wait till he finds himself assailed upon the throne, the hurry and confusion, which must prevail, will give us opportunities which we do not now possess. Then, Chartley, I will redeem my plighted word to you, and, whenever I know the moment, will let you hear, and stake the happiness of my life upon your faith and truth. —But even then, I must make some conditions."

Chartley mused; and Iola thought it was the word, conditions, which surprised and made him thoughtful; but it was not so.

"These reasonings on the passing events

must have been prompted to her," he thought. "They are not those of Iola herself."

She went on however, under the impression I have stated, and that in a gayer tone, because she thought the stipulations she was going to make were not likely to be refused.

"My conditions are very hard ones," she said, "and may well plunge you in a reverie, noble lord. They are that, when I am your wife, I may be never asked, why I go not to confession—"

She looked up in his face with a smile, and added:

"The truth is, I have so many, and such heinous sins, that I fear to confess to the priest, lest I should not be able, or willing, to perform the penance."

Chartley laughed, saying: "You shall confess them all to me, dear one; and I shall only thank Heaven, that the secrets of your heart are told to none but your husband and your God."

"Oh, you are a heretic, Chartley!" cried

Iola, with a gay and meaning look in his face. "So men would think you, at least, if they heard such words. Perhaps I may think differently. Moreover, you shall not call me to account, if I neglect some other ceremonial parts of what we are taught to believe, religious duties."

Now she looked somewhat timidly at him, as if she did not know how far she could venture to go; and Chartley's face had certainly become graver than she had ever seen it. He pressed her hand tenderly between his own, however, and said, "Dear Iola, I will covenant generally with you, in no degree to meddle with such things. Your words may surprise me and take me unaware; but this I promise, that I will interfere in nought which concerns your religious belief; for I think I understand you, though how all this has come about, I cannot, and do not, divine. One thing however, my Iola, may be decided upon between us at once. If you are searching for truth, let me search with you. Let our minds be bent together to the same great object; but, at

the same time, for our own sakes, and each for the sake of the other, let us be careful in all these matters; for I have already arrived at this conclusion, that those who rule in every spiritual matter, would shut out light from us, and bar the way with the faggot, and the cord, and the sword, against all who do seek for truth."

A look of bright, almost angelic joy, had come upon Iola's countenance as he spoke; and she answered in a low but solemn tone:

"I have found it, Chartley—that truth which you mention."

"Where?" asked Chartley, eagerly.

"I will show you," she replied, "when, with my husband by my side, I can pour out to him, pledged and plighted to me for ever, all the thoughts of a heart which shall never be opened to any other mortal being. Your words, Chartley, have been to me a blessing and an assurance.—Oh, God, I thank thee. My last fear and doubt are removed!—Now let us talk of other things; for you must go indeed. Tell

me where you will fix your abode for the next few days. Then I shall not need to watch you; for I have been obliged to place spies upon you, in order to know where to find you in case of need."

"I will fix my quarters at Atherston," answered Chartley. "But are you a little queen, that you have spies at will, and messengers over all the land, with castle gates flying open before you, and means of travelling invisible to human eyes. How was it, in Heaven's name, you escaped from Chidlow castle; for I have heard nothing more than the mere assurance which you sent Constance the day after, that you were in safety."

"I must not tell you all," answered Iola, gravely, "at least, not yet, Chartley; but this much I may say, though it will sound very strange to your ears, that there are many, very many—aye, thousands upon thousands—of people in this land, all linked together by ties the most sacred, who have been forced by long and bitter persecutions, to establish means of

communicating with each other, and of aiding and assisting each other in time of need. They are to be found in the courts of princes, in the mart, the church, and the camp; but they are known only to each other, and not always even that. They are innocent of all offence, peaceable, blameless; yet, if they be discovered, death is the punishment for the mere thoughts of the mind. I tell you they are many, Chartley. They are increasing daily, in silence and in secret; but the time will come, and that ere long, when their voice will be heard, aloud and strong; and no man shall dare to bid it cease. To them I owe much help. But now indeed we must part."

The parting lasted well nigh as long as the interview; and though it had its pain, yet Chartley went with a happier heart, and with hope and expectation once more burning as bright as ever.

CHAPTER IX.

In a large room, of the convent of Black Nuns near Tewksbury, with a vaulted roof and one window at the farther end, seated at a small table, and with an open parchment book upon it, was the Princess Mary or Margaret of Scotland—for she is occasionally called in history by both those names. She was diligently examining the pages of the volume, in which seemed to be written a number of names, with comments attached to them, in the margin, in a different coloured ink. On the opposite side of the table, stood an elderly man in the garb of a monk, who remained without speaking, and with his eyes fixed calmly upon

the princess, apparently not comprehending the object of her search.

At length, when she had run her eye and her finger down the whole line of names upon every page, pausing for a moment here and there, to examine the observations attached to some particular entry, the princess raised her eyes to the old man's face, saying—

"And these are all the men of note, you are sure, good father, who fell at Tewksbury."

"All who are buried here," replied the monk. "There were some others, whose names you will find, if you turn over two pages, who were borne away to rest elsewhere. They were not many; for their friends did not like to come forward and claim them, for fear of being compromised in what was called the treason. So all that were not claimed, were buried here, and the rest, as I said removed."

Mary turned over to the page which he mentioned, and found some twelve or fourteen other names, which, to her at least, were totally without interest. She then closed the book,

and gave it to the monk, saying "I thank you much, good father. There is something to benefit your convent, and pay masses for the souls of those who fell."

The old man called down a blessing on her head, and walked slowly along to the end of the old vaulted room, in order to depart, passing a gay and sunny looking girl as he did so. She advanced with a light step from the door, towards the princess's chair, looking as she went by the old man in his sober gray gown, like spring by the side of winter; and, when she came near the lady, she said, holding up a small packet in her hand—

"Here is a curious thing, your highness, which has just been shown to me by an extraordinary sort of man. He wishes you to buy it; and in good truth it is not dear. I never saw anything more beautiful."

"I am not in the mood for buying gewgaws, child," replied the princess. "Well, show it to me, not that I shall purchase it; for of that there is little chance."

The young lady immediately advanced, and placed in her hand a golden cross, ornamented with sardonix stones, Mary hardly looking at it till she had received it fully, her mind being probably busy with what had just been passing. When her eyes at length fixed on it, however, her countenance underwent a strange and rapid change. Her cheek grew pale; her beautiful eyes almost started from their sockets; and with a low cry, as if of pain and surprise, she sank back into her chair.

"Good Heaven, what is the matter, lady?" exclaimed the girl. "Your highness is faint—Let me fly for help."

But Mary waved her hand for silence, covered her eyes for a moment, and then bending down her head over the cross, seemed to examine it attentively. But the girl who stood by her side, saw clearly tears drop rapidly from her eyes upon the trinket.

The moment after, the princess dashed the drops away, and turning to her attendant with a face full of eagerness, demanded:

"Where is the man? Bring him hither instantly."

The changes of expression in her countenance had been so lightning like, so rapid, that the girl stood for a moment like one bewildered, but then at an impatient gesture of the princess, hurried from the room. At the end of a minute or two, she returned followed by the piper, somewhat better clothed than usual, but still bearing evident signs of his class, if not of his profession about him. The princess fixed her eyes upon his face, with a keen, penetrating, inquiring look, as if she would have searched his soul, and then said, turning to the girl who had accompanied him into the room: "Retire."

Still after the attendant was gone, Mary continued to gaze upon the man before her in silence. It seemed, as if she wished, before she spoke, to read something of his nature and his character from his looks. At length, in a low and tremulous, but yet distinct voice, she asked:

"Where got you this cross?"

"That, I must not say, lady," replied the piper. "Are you the princess Mary of Scotland?"

"I am," she answered. "Must not say?—Good faith, but you must say! This cross is mine; and I will know how you possessed yourself of it."

"If you be the princess Mary of Scotland, and that cross be yours," replied the piper, who was now quite sober, and had all his wits about him, "I was bid to tell you that the fate of the person you seek for, may still be heard of near the abbey of St. Clare of Atherston.—You may keep the cross without payment, for in reality, it was sent to you as a token."

"Keep it," cried the princess, pressing it to her bosom, "that I will! I will never part with it more. Payment! Here, hold out your hand;" and half emptying her purse into it, she added: "Had you brought me a king's crown, you had brought me nothing half so

precious." Then leaning her brow upon her fair hands, she fell into a long, deep train of thought, which, perhaps led her far away, to early days, and scenes of youthful joy and happiness, while hope, and love, and ignorance of ill, the guardian angels of youth's paradise, watched round her path and round her bed. At length, she seemed to tear herself away from the visions of memory ; and looking up, she said, in a slow and somewhat sad voice—

"St. Clare of Atherston—Aye, it was near there, at Atherston moor—But, how can that be? I have watched, and enquired, and examined, and seen with mine own eyes; and there was no trace."

"I cannot tell your highness, how it can be," replied the messenger ; "for I know little or nothing ; and guesses are bad guides. But this I can do. I can lead you to one who can give you all the tidings you desire."

"Ha!" cried the princess, starting up. "Let us go—Let us go at once. I will give instant orders."

"Nay, sweet lady," answered the piper. "In good sooth, my horse must have some time for rest; and my old bones are weary too; for I have had scanty fare and long riding."

"You shall have refreshment," said the princess. "I would not be unmerciful, even in my impatience; but yet we must set out to-night. I will not lay my head upon a pillow till I am upon the way.—Now, tell me before I send you to get food and rest, who is the person to whom you take me?"

"Nay, that I know not," replied Sam. "I have given my message as I received it. I know no more."

"Now this is very strange," exclaimed Mary, "and raises doubts. I know not that I have injured any one, or that there is any who should wish to do me wrong; but yet I have found that men will wrong each other full often without a cause, sometimes without an object—Yet this cross, this cross!—I will go, whatever befall. This cannot lie or cheat—I will go. But one thing at all events you can tell me Whither are

you going to lead me. You must know the place, if not the person."

"Ay, that I can tell, and may tell," replied Sam. "It is to the house of a poor honest franklin, who labours his own land, in the heart of an old wood. A quiet and a secret place it is, nearly half way 'twixt Atherston and St. Clare. The man is a good and honest man too, lady, of more than seventy years of age, who lives in great retirement, rarely seen but once in every summer month at Atherston market, where he sells his corn and sheep; and when they are sold, he goes back upon his way, holding but little talk with any one."

"Seventy years of age," said the princess, thoughtfully. "Nay, that cannot be then."

"But indeed it is, lady," replied the piper, mistaking her meaning; "for I have known him twenty years myself and more, and have seen his hair grow grizzled gray, and then as white as snow."

"Did you ever know or hear," demanded the princess, "of a dying or wounded knight

being carried thither, from any of the last combats that took place between Lancaster and York—I mean about the time of Tewksbury?"

"No," replied Sam; "but I was lying ill then, being hurt with a pike at Barnet, and could not walk for many a month."

"And you can tell no more?" asked the princess.

"No, nothing more," he answered, "but that there, you will have the tidings which you seek, as surely as you see that cross in your hand."

"Come of it what will, I will go," said the princess. "But which is the safest road; for it is strongly rumoured here, that the earl of Richmond has landed somewhere on the coast, and that armies are gathering fast to meet him. We might be stopped."

"Oh no, all is quiet in this part of the land," replied the other; "and we can easily go by Evesham and Coventry. I heard all the news as I journeyed on. The earl, they say, has

indeed landed in the far parts of Wales; but his force is very small, and not likely to stand against Sir Walter Herbert who commands there—A mere scum of that ever boiling pot called, France, with scattered and tattered gabardines, lean and hungry as wolves."

"They may be found as fierce as wolves," said the princess. "But it matters not. I will go, even should they be fighting in the midst of the road. Now, good man, you shall have food, and your horse too. I give you till four o'clock—time enough for rest. Be you ready; and if you lead me aright, you shall have further recompense."

Her impatience somewhat outran the clock. She was on horseback with her train, some minutes before four; and ere they paused for the night, they reached the small town of Evesham. The next day brought them to Coventry; and thence a short day's journey remained to Atherston. They arrived in the evening; but still there were two or three hours of light; and as soon as the princess had

entered the small inn, to which she had sent forward harbingers, she ordered her guide to be called, and told him that in half an hour she would be ready to set out.

"The place cannot be far," she said, "for I remember the road well; and 'tis not a two hours' ride, hence to St. Clare."

"Were it not better to wait till morning?" demanded Sam, with a look of some doubt. "It will take you well nigh an hour and a half to reach the place we are going to, and—"

"And what?" demanded Mary, seeing the man pause and hesitate.

"I was going to say," replied Sam, "that you must take but two attendants with you—men to hold the horses; and it might be as well to wait till morning, as I hear troops are gathering fast, and tending towards Nottingham, so that 'tis better to ride by daylight."

Mary gazed at him with some suspicions rising again in her mind; but yet the very wish to travel by daylight, seemed to speak honesty of purpose.

"Was that what the man told you, whom I saw speaking to you at the door?" she asked.

"Yes," replied Sam. "He told me there were troops moving about in all directions."

"And why must I have only two men with me?" she demanded.

"I know not," replied the piper. "So I am I told. But if you have any fears, I will remain in the hands of your men, while you go in. They can easily drive a sword through me, if any evil happens to you; but I only say, it is better to go in the morning, lest we should meet any of the roving bands, which always flock to the gathering of armies. Be it, however, as you please."

Mary thought for two or three moments, but then rose, saying—

"I will go, and at once. I cannot rest in uncertainty—Let them bring forth the horses as soon as they are fed. We will ride quick, and make the way short."

From Atherston, for about half a mile, the little party pursued the highway, till shortly

after crossing the little river Anker, from the banks of which they turned through lanes and bye paths, till they came to a piece of sloping ground, where two hills crossed each other with a low dell between them. A small stream ran in the valley; and beyond the opposite slope, towards the north west, extended a considerable mass of wood-land, over which were seen, rising at the distance of five or six miles, the ruined walls and towers of the old castle near St. Clare. The sun was already on the horizon; and the spot over which they rode, was in shadow; but the sky was beautifully clear; and the golden light of the setting sun caught the high distant ruins, and the young trees upon the hill on which it stood.

"Here," said the piper, who was riding beside Mary to show her the way, "here was fought the last skirmish of the war. It was one of the most bloody too; for little quarter was given; and many a brave soldier and noble gentleman fell here."

"I know it well," said Mary, with her eyes full of tears. "I have been here to weep before now. Oh, that my eyes could pierce those green grassy mounds, and know who sleeps beneath."

"They were not all buried here," said Sam, in a low tone. "Some were buried at the abbey, and some at Atherston. Those were the knights and captains. The common soldiers lie here."

Mary rode on in silence; and more than once she wiped the tears from her eyes. A mile farther brought them to the wood; but from this side the distance to the franklin's house was farther; and the last quarter of a mile was ridden in twilight. At length, however, while they could still see, they came in sight of the low house, with its single story, and the cultivated ground around it; and pointing with his hand, the piper said, in a low voice—

"That is the house. Now you must go forward alone, lady; and when you reach the

door knock hard with your hand, and they will give you admission. Ask to see the lady."

"The lady!" said Mary, in a tone of surprise.

"Yes," replied her guide, "the lady. I will stay here with the horses, in the hands of your servants. There, you will get the tidings which you have long sought."

The lady dismounted, and bidding the servants wait, walked along the little path. They could see her approach the house, and knock with her hand at the door. It was opened instantly; and she disappeared.

CHAPTER X.

An old man, with a long white beard, presented himself before the princess countess of Arran, almost the moment after she had knocked, and in answer to her demand to see the lady, simply said, "Follow me;" and led the way along the passage. Her heart beat; her brain seemed giddy; her whole frame was agitated: but she went on; and, at the end of a step or two, her guide opened a door, and held it in his hand, till she had entered. Then closing it he retired.

The sun, as I have said, had sunk; but the twilight was clear, and the windows of the

room looked towards the west, where lingered still the rosy hues of the setting sun. The room was filled with a sort of hazy purple air, and the objects which it contained, though shadowy and somewhat indistinct, could still be seen clearly enough. Standing not far from one of the windows, with the light back ground of the sky behind her, so that her features were not discernible, the princess Mary beheld the beautiful form of a girl, apparently eighteen or nineteen years of age. As the rays passing from behind, glanced on the rich satin of her robe, and the gold lace that fringed the boddice, it was evident to Mary, that the person before her, was dressed in the gorgeous habiliments of the court of that time. She could see nothing more at the first moment, but as the girl advanced towards her, the face was slightly turned towards the window, and the fine, chizelled features were beheld in profile, showing at once, how beautiful they must be when the light of day displayed them more fully.

"Welcome, lady," said the sweet tones of

Iola, the music of her voice thrilling upon the ear of the princess, like the notes of some delicate instrument, although there was much emotion in those tones. "You have come somewhat sooner than I expected. I presume I speak to the princess Mary."

"The same, my child," replied the lady, taking her hand, which Iola had partly offered. "This is a strange meeting; and you tremble more than I do, though I am told, that from your voice I shall hear tidings, which, whatever be their especial nature, may well shake and agitate my heart and frame."

"I am not wont to be so weak," said Iola; "nor to fear, nor to hesitate; but, yet I cannot help it at this moment. Let us sit down for a while, and speak of other things, so that these emotions may pass away."

"They will but increase by delay," replied Mary; "and I am eager to hear from your lips, or indeed from any lips, those tidings which to me are as the words of Fate. Speak,

then, dear child, speak at once, and tell me what you know."

"Nay, lady," said Iola, in a very grave, and even melancholy tone, withdrawing her hand from that of the princess. "I have questions to ask as well as you; and they must be answered, before my lips are unsealed."

"Nay: this is cruel," said the princess Mary, "to torture me with delay, when the sight of that cross, the gift of early pure affection, to him I loved the best, and this mysterious journey, and this strange meeting, have raised my expectations—oh, that I dared say my hopes to the highest point—It is cruel indeed."

"No, not cruel," answered Iola. "Could the dead see all the actions of the living, would the living dare to meet the dead? I have a hard and painful task to perform; and I must perform it. Yet, dear lady, I would do it with all gentleness, for I have to ask painful questions—questions, which, if my heart tell me true, may raise anger and indignation, as well as cause pain and sorrow."

"Speak then, speak then," said Mary, impatiently. "Let them be quickly over."

"Well then, as it must be so," said Iola, "let me first say, I know the early history well, the marriage of the princess Mary to the earl of Arran, her brother's subject and friend, the advantage which base enemies took of his absence in Denmark in his sovereign's service, to ruin his father and his uncle, to seize his estates, forfeit his honours, and blast his name—a name on which the voice of calumny never breathed till then."

Mary sank into a seat and covered her eyes with her hands; but Iola went on, seeming to hurry her words to get over her painful task with speed.

"I know too," she said, "the generous devotion of the princess, that she fled in disguise from her brother's court, to warn her husband of his danger, when he returned from his successful embassy, bringing with him his sovereign's royal bride; I know that she sought his fleet in a poor skiff, and fled with him into

exile and poverty; I know that she only returned to her own land, after years of exile, on the delusive promise that her petition and submission would recover his estates and honours, for him she loved. Hitherto, all is clear; but, now comes the question—Lady, forgive me," she continued, taking Mary's hand, and kissing it; "but I must pain you."

"Speak, dear child, speak," said the princess. "There is nought in my whole life, that I am not ready to tell here or anywhere."

"Well then," said Iola, with a sigh: "did the princess Mary, when her husband was doing his knightly devoir here on this English ground, in behalf of the house which had befriended him and his, did she consent to a divorce from her once loved lord, and ——"

"Never, never, never!" cried the princess, starting from her seat, "never, by word or deed —What, has that dark tale come hither too? 'Twas done without my consent or knowledge; and when done, I raised my voice, and wrote my protest against it. They told me he was

dead. They told me that he fell there, on Atherston moor — fell as he lived, in noble deeds and gallant self devotion."

"And then hearing of his death," said Iola, in a voice sunk to the lowest tone with emotion; "the princess married James, Lord Hamilton."

"'Tis false!" exclaimed Mary, vehemently; and then, clasping Iola's hand in her own, she added: "Strange, mysterious girl, how is it that you, who know so much, do not know more? Hamilton was kind. He sought my noble husband as brother, spoke in his favour to the king, raised his voice with mine; and, when at length the news of his death came, my brother and my sovereign, signed a contract of marriage on my behalf, between him and me, and in his bounty, gave lands and lordships to Lord Hamilton and the Princess Mary, his wife. They laid the contract before me; and, I tore it and scattered it to the winds—for I had doubts," she added, in a low, thoughtful voice. "I saw couriers going

and coming to and from England, whose tidings were concealed from me; and, I had doubts—I have still doubts that he died then. Now, I am sure he is dead, or they would not give me liberty to roam and seek his burial-place; for, ever since that day, when I tore the contract before my brother's face, in name I have been free, in truth a prisoner. I had but one faithful servant, whom I could trust. He indeed, once deceived me, because he was himself deceived. He told me that my husband was dead in Denmark; and, when we found, from certain intelligence, that he was here in England, warring for the house of Lancaster, the poor man was more thunderstruck than I was, for I had not believed the tale. Oh, how the heart clings to Hope—how it clasps the faded flower, when, even the root is withered. Still, still, till the end I hoped! With what tears I watered my pillow! With what prayers I wearied Heaven. Although I saw letters telling plainly that he died sword in hand, on Atherston moor, I would not believe, till they told me at length,

but a few months since, that, if I pleased, I might come and seek him myself. But, oh, dear child, that hope which I so fondly clung to, would become a horror and a terror, if I could believe that my dear, my noble Arran, had been lingering on here, living, and yet doubting of my faith and truth. I know what his noble mind would have felt; I know how his kind and generous heart would have been wrung; I know the black despair into which he would have fallen—But it cannot be. I will not believe it. He would have written; he would have sent; he would have found some means to re-assure and comfort me. Now then, I have answered all. Tell me, tell me, I beseech you, how died my husband? Where have they laid him?—But, you are weeping, my poor child."

"Stay a moment," said Iola, her voice half choked with sobs. "I shall recover in a minute. Then I will tell you all;" and breaking away from her, she quitted the room suddenly.

With a foot of light, Iola trod the passage

nearly to the end, and opened a door, from which immediately a light streamed forth. Sitting at a table underneath a burning sconce, with his arms resting on the board, and his forehead on his arms, was a tall and powerful man, dressed in the garments of a nobleman of high rank, somewhat antiquated indeed in point of fashion, but still rich and in good taste. He seemed not to hear Iola's foot; for he moved not, although the stillness of his figure was broken by the heaving of his chest with a long, deep, gasping sigh. She laid her hand upon his arm, saying:

"Look up, look up. Sunshine has come again."

He raised his head with a start; and the countenance before her was that of Boyd the woodman.

With that eager grace so charming to see but indescribable in words, Iola caught his hand and kissed it, as he gazed upon her with a look of doubt and wonder.

"It is all false," she cried, "all, utterly

false! She is yours—has been yours always. True, through wrong, and persecution, and deceit, she is yours still—yours only."

"False," cried Boyd. "False? How can it be false? With my own eyes I saw the announcement of his sister's marriage to James Hamilton, in the king's own hand."

"He signed the contract," cried Iola, "without her consent; but she tore the contract, and refused to ratify it."

"But my letters, my unanswered letters?" said Boyd.

She has been watched and guarded, surrounded by spies and deceivers," exclaimed Iola, eagerly. "Hear all I have to tell you. Much may even then remain to be explained, but, believe me, oh, believe me, all will be explained clearly and with ease."

"I know that one traitor, that John Radnor, was bought to tell her I was dead, when not ten days before he had spoken to me—me ever his kind and generous lord—and knew that I was safe and well. I saw the proof of the villain's

treachery; and I slew him; but oh, I cannot think that there are many such. Yet they have been fiends of hell indeed; for torture, such as the damned undergo, were not more than they have fixed on me, by making me think my Mary, my beautiful, my devoted, false to him she loved."

"Oh, she was never false," cried Iola. "They thought to cheat her to her own despair, by tales of your death; but the instinct of true love taught her to doubt, till she had seen your tomb with her own eyes."

"I will go to her. I will go to her," cried the earl of Arran, rising up, and taking a step or two towards the door. But there he paused, and asked, "Does she still believe me dead?"

"She does," replied Iola, "though perhaps a spark of hope is kindled."

"Go and fan it into flame," replied the earl. "gently, gently, Iola. I will bear the delay, Yet come as soon as ever she can bear to see me—Do it speedily, dear girl, but yet, not rashly."

"I will be careful. I will be very careful," said Iola; and hurrying away, she returned to the chamber where she had left the Princess Mary, bearing a light with her.

"You have been long, my child," said the Princess; "but your young heart knows not the anguish of mine; and that fair face speaks no unkindness."

"It would speak falsely, did it do so," replied Iola. "Methinks, the power to give joy and reawaken hope, were the brightest prerogative that man could obtain from Heaven. And now be seated, dear lady; and I will sit on this stool at your feet, and tell you a tale, woven into which will be answers to all that you could question, with many a comfort too, and a balm for a crushed and wounded heart."

"Angel," cried the princess, drawing her to her and kissing her brow, "you look and speak like one of Heaven's comforting spirits."

"Listen then," said Iola. "'Tis more than ten years ago that a party of the lords of Lancaster, led by the gallant earl of Arran, as

the most experienced of the troop, hastened across this country to join queen Margaret's force at Tewksbury. The news of Barnet had vaguely reached them; but still they hurried on in the direction which the retreating army had taken. The main body of their little force remained for the night on the green at St. Clare. I remember it well, though I was then but a child of eight years old; for the earl of Arran came to the abbey; and I saw him there in his glittering armour. He came on here himself, with several other gentlemen, and lodged for the night at this house; for he had learned that a superior body of troops was on the way to cut him off, in the neighbourhood of Atherston. The old man whom you saw but now, tried to persuade him to retreat; but his high courage and his good faith led him on; and, on the following day, he encountered the enemy on the moor, and, for nearly two hours, made his ground good against a force treble his own numbers. At length, however, in a strong effort to break through, having already received

an arrow in the arm and a wound in the head, he was cast from his horse by a lance which pierced through and through his corslet. The troops then fled; and the day was lost."

Iola's voice trembled as she spoke; and Mary bent down her head upon her hands and wept.

"Be comforted," said the young girl, taking the princess's hand, and gazing up towards her. "Hear me out; for there is comfort yet."

"Ha!" exclaimed Mary, suddenly lifting her head. "Was he not slain then—was he not slain?"

"Hear me to the end," said Iola, "and hear me calmly. The old man you saw but now, had been a follower of the house of Lancaster. He was interested too in that noble lord; and when he beheld the fugitives pass along the edge of the wood, and the fierce pursuers spurring after, he went away towards the field to see if he could aid the wounded. He found a number of the people from the abbey upon the field, and some of the good sisters. Litters were

procured: the wounded men were removed; the dying had the consolations of religion; but the earl of Arran was not found amongst either. While the old man went his way, the litters travelled slowly to St. Clare. She who was abbess then, asked anxiously for the earl of Arran; but they told her that he was neither amongst the wounded, nor the dying, nor the dead. She said they must be mistaken; for a soldier, who had stopped to get a draught of water at the fountain, had seen him fall pierced with a spear; and she sent them back with torches, for, by this time, it was night, to seek for him once more. They sought for him in vain; but the old franklin, as he had turned homewards, had seen something glitter in the bushes just at the edge of the wood. On looking nearer, he found that it was the form of an armed man, with the head of a lance in his breast. The staff was broken off."

"Oh, God, was he living?" exclaimed the princess.

"He was," replied Iola, "nay, be calm,

be calm, and hear me out. I must tell the rest rapidly. The old man staid with him till nightfall; then got a cart and moved him hither, where a great part of his baggage had been left. They dared not send for a surgeon; for pursuit after the house of Lancaster was fierce; and slaughter raged throughout the land. But the old man himself extracted the lance's head, and stanched the bleeding by such simples as he knew. For three months he tended him as a father would a child; but for nearly a year he was feeble and unable to move."

"Does he live, does he live?" cried the princess.

"Can you bear it?" asked Iola. "He did live long, for many years; but he heard tidings which disgusted him with life. Hermit or monk he would not become; for he had other thoughts; but he cast off rank and state, and putting on a lowly garb, he lived as a mere woodman in a forest near, a servant of the abbey where all my youth was spent."

"But now, but now?" demanded Mary. "Does he live now—Oh, tell me, tell me!"

As she spoke the door opened. Mary raised her eyes and gazed forward, with a look of wild bewilderment, and then, with a cry of joy and recognition, sprang forward and cast herself upon her husband's bosom.

CHAPTER XI.

Confusion and agitation pervaded England from end to end. Men gathered together in the streets, and talked. Couriers passed between house and house. The fat citizen gossipped with his neighbour, over the events of the day, and looked big and important, as he doled out the news to his better half at home. The peasantry too, were moved by feelings of their own. The village green, and the ale house, had their politicians. The good wife looked anxious, lest Hob should be taken for

a soldier; and the old men and women recalled the days, when the feuds of York and Lancaster were at their height, and hoped that such times were not coming again.

Still, however, the news spread far and wide, that the earl of Richmond had landed on the Welsh coast, and was marching towards London to grasp the crown. From castle to castle, and city to city, and cottage to cottage, the rumour rolled on. He was there—actually there, upon English ground; the long expected blow was struck: the long anticipated enterprise had begun.

Busy emissaries too, whispered in every ear, that Richmond was affianced to the heiress of the house of York. There was no longer a question of York and Lancaster. It was no longer a fratricidal war between the descendants of the same ancestor; but York and Lancaster were united; and the long rival factions took their stand, and unfurled their banners, side by side, against one who was equally inimical to both. Every evil act which Richard had committed, was called to

memory, denounced, and exaggerated. False facts were fabricated, many of which have been transmitted to the present day, to blacken his character, and misrepresent his conduct. His views, his deeds, his very person were all distorted; and the current of popular opinion was turned strongly against him. Still the prudent, the timid, and the idle, counselled together, and prepared to follow a temporising policy.

"Take my advice," said an old man to his neighbours, "keep quite quiet; take part with neither; let Lancaster cut York's throat or York Lancaster's, or both join to destroy Richard, we have nothing to do with such things. We shall suffer enough, whichever wins the day; but better to suffer in pocket than to die or get wounds in a cause which concerns us very little. One king is for us just as good as another; and as to the question of right, as no doctors have settled it, how should we be able to decide? Keep quiet; and let them fight it out amongst themselves."

Such was very commonly the feeling amongst the lower classes of the people; and many of a higher rank were moved by the same considerations. "If we fight for Richmond;" they thought, "he may lose a battle; and then we are at the mercy of Richard. If on the contrary we march under the banners of Richard, he may be defeated, and Richmond have our fate in his hands."

The higher nobility indeed, pursued a different course. They began to gather men; they made preparations for war; but they kept as secret as possible, in what direction they intended to act. They were in general very silent as to their intentions, though exceedingly busy and active in their preparation; and constant communications were passing from one to the other, the nature of which was not discovered.

The only one who seemed inactive in the realm, was the king himself. He, so energetic and daring in the camp and the field, so astute and cautious in the council-chamber, for a

time seemed to do very little. The first news of Richmond's armament, indeed had almost cast him into a state of frenzy; but, when he learned that the earl had landed at Milford haven, with but three thousand men, his rage appeared to sink into contempt. He treated his coming as a mere bravado, and seemed to scorn the display of any extraordinary measures against so pitiful an attack.

"Sir Walter Herbert will give a good account of him," he said, when some of his courtiers spoke of the invasion. "Herbert has full five thousand men, choice soldiers, ready and fit to rid our soil of these French weeds, or I know nought of gardening. We shall soon hear news of him."

He did soon hear news; but it was that Richmond marched on unopposed, through the land, that he had been joined by Rice ap Thomas, with a thousand men, that Savage had gone over to him, that Herbert made no movement to oppose his progress, that Wales was rising rapidly in his favour, that friends and sup-

plies were pouring into his camp, and that he was rapidly advancing upon Shrewsbury. Then it was that Richard, not only felt the necessity of energy, but became sensible of his danger, and began to act with that fierce and impatient eagerness, which had formerly characterized him. His messengers hastened over all the country, calling every one he could count upon to arms, and ordering those who were doubtful, to join him at Nottingham, without an hour's delay. Norfolk and Northumberland, were summoned in the same terms ; but while the one hastened to obey, with all the promptitude of zealous attachment, the other made no professions, but slowly raised men, and marched with tardy steps, into such a position that he could act as he judged fit, whenever the moment for action came. Catesby hurried up with all the men that he could raise ; and many others came in with extraordinary speed ; for though disaffection had spread wide, it was by no means universal ; and many of those who were discontented, were not willing to aid in hurling Richard from the

throne. The army increased in number daily; and when the king compared his own force with that of Richmond, even after the latter had reached Shrewsbury, and had been joined by the young earl of that name, and the Lord Talbot, he laughed all fears of danger to scorn, and prepared to cast himself in the way of his enemy, in whatever direction he might bend his steps. Lord Calverly was sent to raise all his tenantry and dependants; and, amongst others to whom messengers were despatched, to call them immediately to the aid of the crown, were Fulmer and Chartley. The courier sent to the former, found him on the full march from Dorsetshire, and returned to Richard with this reply to his summons—

"The Lord Fulmer craves the king's pardon, for moving without his commands; but having learned that the earl of Richmond had landed in Wales, he thought he could not be far wrong in marching at once, to offer his sword and his troops to his sovereign's service."

Richard was surrounded by many persons, when these words were reported; but shortly after, he whispered to Ratcliffe, who stood near him, saying—

"This youth Fulmer deserves well. He shall have his bride. But not yet, Ratcliffe—not yet. We must crush this Breton-nurtured, young Richmond, and then we will have gay days and bridals. The girl must be brought to a place of security. We will send her to York."

"But your grace forgets that she is not at the abbey," replied Ratcliff, who took the king's words for a command. "She must be found, before she can be sent to York."

Richard smiled, with one of his dark looks of serpent subtlety, in which a slight touch of scorn mingled with an expression of triumphant cunning.

"She needs not to be found," he answered; "but what said the young Lord Chartley to our summons? Has he returned no answer?"

"He called for his horse at the first word, sire," replied Ratcliff, "and said, that in four days his tenants should be in the field."

"Impetuous ever!" said Richard; but then he fell into a fit of musing, and his brow grew somewhat dark. "Four days," he repeated, "four days? That argues preparation. He has a two day's journey, speed as he will. His tenants shall be in the field—Ay, but for whom? Send some one after him. Bid him join us at Broughton, and let him be well watched."

"At Broughton, sire?" said Ratcliff, in a doubtful tone.

"Yes," answered Richard, "we march to-morrow for Leicester. At Broughton, we have him at our will. Have you heard from Lord Stanley, or his brother, Sir William?"

"He is true, I doubt not, sire," replied Ratcliff; "the last news was that he had fallen back somewhat from Lichfield, upon the advance of Richmond, not having force to oppose him, since the defection of Sir George Talbot

and the earl of Shrewsbury. But 'tis said his brother William is marching to join him with two thousand men, and they will fight the traitor as soon as they meet."

"That must not be," said Richard, with a stern, thoughtful look. "If they win the field, a subject gains the honor which the crown should have. If they fail, they plume this gosshawk's wings with the eagle pens of victory, and many will draw to him after a won battle, many fall from us. There is ever, Ratcliff, a light and fickle crowd, that flutters round success, heedless of right or merit, as clouds gather round the rising sun to gild their empty vapors in the beams that suck them up ere it be noon. No, no! We will have no one either snatch Richmond from our hand, or try and fail. Bid them fall back as he advances, till, with our kingly force, we overwhelm him like a rat in a torrent. Send off a post to night; and, in the meanwhile, watch well the young Lord Strange. His neck is better security than his good father's faith. We will to Leicester early, before the

army. But it must not lag behind. One day's march lost, and Richmond would slip by. He must not reach St. Paul's."

Thus saying, he turned to the rest of the courtiers, and spoke of other things.

CHAPTER XII.

The sun had set nearly an hour. The moon had not yet risen; and the forest was all in darkness; but there were many people round the door of the woodman's cottage. Horsemen, and men in armour, and a groom leading a beautiful white horse, evidently caparisoned for a lady. Through the chinks of the boards which covered the windows, much light was streaming; and the scene within was an unusual one for such a place. There were four persons standing round a table, on which was laid a parchment; and Iola and Chartley had just signed it. The earl of Arran took the pen

and gave it to the princess countess of Arran, who added her name to the act; and he, himself, then subscribed his own.

Two or three of the attendants, male and female, attested the deed likewise; and then the woodman, if we may still so call him, placed Iola's hand in Chartley's, saying, "Now, take her, noble lord, and place her beyond risk and danger as speedily as may be. To your honour she is trusted; and I do believe that neither your honour nor your love will ever fail; but yet, remember she is not your wife till the ceremonies of religion have consecrated the bond between you. I trust we shall all meet again soon, in the presence of those who may rightly judge of these matters; and I promise you there to prove, that the contract between this lady and the Lord Fulmer, is utterly null and void, and that this contract is legal and good. To insure all, however—for who shall count upon even a single day—give this letter to the earl of Richmond, when you have joined him, and tell him it comes from

the woodman, who once sent him intelligence which saved him from captivity, and perhaps from death.—Now, God's blessing be upon you, my children.—Nay, let us have no farewells, dear Iola. Take her, Chartley, take her, and away."

"But was not Constance to meet us here?" said Iola, in a low tone. "I thought she was to be my companion."

"I fear that has gone wrong," said the woodman. "The abbey gates were closed an hour before sunset; and even one of my men was refused admission to the mere outer court; but I shall join you soon and bring you news. Though I can raise no great force, yet with what men I can muster I will not fail to help the noble earl with my own hand. So tell him."

Thus saying, he led Iola to the door of the cottage, with his own strong arms, placed her on the horse's back, and then, with one more blessing, retired from her side. Chartley sprang lightly and happily into the saddle; and

the whole party rode on. It consisted of some twenty men besides the lover and his lady; and, at a quick pace, they proceeded through the forest, taking very nearly the same direction which had been followed by the woodman and the bishop of Ely, but, by the general road, instead of the narrow and somewhat circuitous paths along which the prelate had been led.

I have not time or space to pause upon the feelings of Iola at that moment—at least, not to describe minutely. They were strange and new to her. She had encountered danger; she had resisted anger, without fear; but her circumstances now were very different. She was not only going alone with the man whom she loved, into the wide world, with perils, changes, and events, surrounding them on all sides like a mist, through which, the most piercing eye could not discover one ray of light; but she was quitting all old associations, breaking through every habit of thought, entering upon an entirely new state of being. The grave of a woman's first life is her marriage contract. Did she doubt? Did she

hesitate? Oh, no, she feared for the future in one sense, but in one sense alone. She believed, she knew, she felt, that she had chosen well, that Chartley's love would not alter, nor his tenderness grow cold, that her happiness was in him, and was as secure as any fabric can be, built upon a mortal and perishable base; but she felt that in uniting her fate to his, if she doubled the enjoyments and the happiness of being, she doubled the dangers and anxieties also. She was much moved, but not by that consideration—in truth her emotion sprang not from consideration at all. It was a sensation—a sensation of the awfulness of the change; and though it did not make her tremble, yet whenever she thought of it, and all that it implied through the wide long future, a thrill passed through her heart which almost stopped its beatings.

With Chartley it was very different. Men cannot feel such things with such intensity, nay, can hardly conceive them. His sensations were all joyful. Hope, eager passion, gratified love made his heart bound high, and filled it

with new fire and energy. He was aware that many dangers were around them, that every hour and every moment had its peril, and that then a strife must come, brief and terrible, in which, perhaps, all his new born joys might be extinguished in death. But yet, strange to say, the thought of death, which had never been very fearful to him, lost even a portion of its terrors rather than acquired new ones, by what might appear additional ties to existence. We little comprehend in these our cold calculating days—in an age which may be designated "The age of the absence of enthusiasms"—we little comprehend, I say, the nature of chivalrous love; nor, indeed, any of the enthusiasms of chivalry. I must not stay to descant upon them; but suffice it to say, Chartley felt that, whenever he might fall, to have called Iola his own, was a sufficient joy for one mortal life, that to do great deeds and die with high renown, loving and beloved and wept, was a fate well worthy of envy and not regret.

Still he had some faint notion of what must be passing in her breast. He felt that the very situation must agitate her; he fancied that the mere material danger that surrounded them might alarm her; and he hastened to cheer and re-assure her as much as might be.

"I trust, dearest Iola," he said, "that I shall not weary you by this fast riding, after all the agitation of to-day. Once past Tamworth, and we shall be more secure; for all my men muster at Fazely; and, I trust to find myself at the head of three hundred horse."

"Do you stop at Tamworth?" asked Iola. "I have heard that there are parties of the king's troops there."

"We must leave it on the right, where the roads separate," replied Chartley. "Stanley, I hear, is retreating somewhere in this direction from Lichfield; but, him I do not fear. If we reach Lichfield in safety, all danger is past. Ride on, dear one, for a moment, while I speak to some of the men in the rear. I will not be an instant, ere I return to your side."

He might perceive something to raise apprehension, as he thus spoke, or he might not; but Chartley dropped back, and gave orders to two of the men, to keep at the distance of a hundred yards behind the rest, and if the slightest signs of pursuit were observed, to give instant warning; and then, while returning towards Iola, he paused for an instant by the Arab: "Ibn Ayoub," he said, "in case of attack, I give thee charge of the most precious thing I have. Shouldst thou see signs of strife, seize the lady's bridle, and away for safety, wherever the road is clear. Fleet will be the horses that can keep pace with thine and hers. A town, called Lichfield, is the place where we must meet. Thou hast once been there, and dost not forget."

"Why should the emir fight, and the slave fly?" asked Ibn Ayoub; "but, be it as thou wilt."

"It must be so," answered his lord; "now, ride up closer to us, and remember my words."

Thus saying, he spurred on and renewed the

conversation with Iola, in a cheerful, though tender tone, and dear words were spoken, and bright hopes expressed, which made the way seem short. They recalled the past, they talked of the night when they had first met, and their sojourn in the forest, and Iola forgot in part her agitation, in the thrilling dreams of memory; but every now and then, she would wake from them with a start, and recollect that she was there with Chartley—there alone—not to return in a few hours to the friends and companions of early youth, but in one, or, at most, two short days, to be his wife, to renounce all other things for him, and to merge her being into his. It was very sweet; but, it was awful too, and, as from a well in her heart, new feelings gushed and almost overpowered her.

They had passed the turning of the road to Tamworth, and were riding on towards Fazely. All danger of an attack from that side seemed over; and Chartley's conversation became lighter and more gay, when suddenly, one of his men rode up from behind, saying:

"There are some horsemen following, my noble lord. They are but three indeed, of that I am sure, for I rode up to that little hillock on the common, whence I can see for half a mile. But, I thought it best to tell you."

"Spies, perhaps," said Chartley, in a calm tone. "If so, I would fain catch them, and bring them in to Fazely. Ride on, dearest Iola. I will take ten men, and see who these gentlemen are. All is prepared for you at Fazely, and we are beyond peril now. I will follow you at once. Ibn Ayoub, guard the lady."

"Chartley, you would not deceive me?" said Iola; "if there be danger, I would share it at your side."

"Indeed, there is none," replied Chartley; "you heard, dear one, what the man said. I know no more. There are but three men. They can make no attack, and indeed no resistance."

He turned his horse's head as he spoke, and taking the eight last men of the troop with him,

rode back to the rear. He had not far to go, however ; for, about two hundred yards behind, he plainly saw the figures of three horsemen, one in front and two following, coming at a quick pace along the road. He halted his little troop when he could distinguish them, and as they approached nearer, exclaimed :

" Stand ! Who comes here ?"

" Is that thee, Lord Chartley ?" asked a voice, which the young nobleman thought familiar to his ear.

" It matters not who I am," he replied, " you cannot pass till you declare yourself."

" May I never wear aught, but a sorry coloured cloth cloak and brown hosen," cried the other ; " if that be not Chartley's tongue. I am Sir Edward Hungerford, do you not know me ?"

" Faith, Hungerford !" replied Chartley, laughing ; " like a king fisher, you are better known by your feathers than your voice. But, what brings you this way ?"

" Seeking you, good my lord," replied Hun-

gerford, riding up. "I have been over at Atherston enquiring for you, and then upon a certain green near a certain abbey; and I fear me, by riding through these roads, in this dusty August, I have utterly polluted a jerkin of sky blue satin, of the newest and quaintest device—would you could see it; and yet now 'tis hardly fit to be seen, I doubt—but faith, all the news I could get of you, was that you had ridden away towards Fazely, where your musters are making, and as I rode down to the bridge on the Coleshill road, I caught a sound of horses' feet, and followed."

"But what might be your object?" asked Chartley, "what your pressing business with me?"

"Nay, I will tell you, when we get to Fazely," replied Hungerford, "and we had better ride on quick, for I must bear back an answer to Tamworth to-night."

The society of Sir Edward Hungerford, at Fazely, was by no means what Chartley de-

sired: and he determined on his course at once.

"Gramercy, Hungerford!" he said. These are perilous times, which break through courtesies and abridge ceremonies. Fazely is in possession of my merry men. It is an open undefended village, and, I will let none into it, but my own people."

"Why, you do not look on me as a spy," replied Hungerford, in an offended tone, "your hospitality is scanty, my Lord Chartley."

"If you have to return to Tamworth to-night, Hungerford, it is not hospitality you seek," answered Chartley; "true, I do not look on you as a spy, or ought, but the best dressed man of honour in the land; but, I do hold it a point of prudence, in times like these, to let no one know the numbers and disposition of my little force, when one can never tell in what ranks one may see him next. In a word, my gentle friend, I have heard that you have been of late with good Lord Fulmer, down in Dor-

setshire; and Lord Fulmer is much doubted at the court, let me tell you—of his love for me, there is no doubt. Now, if you were seeking me at Atherston and elsewhere, you can speak your errand here as well as at Fazely."

"But you cannot read a billet here as well as at Fazely," replied Hungerford, "no, nor smell out the contents—though I had it scented before I brought it, which he had omitted."

"Who is he?" asked Chartley.

"My noble friend, Lord Fulmer, to be sure," answered the gay knight.

"Ah, then, I guess your errand," replied Chartley, "here, let us dismount and step aside. Mundy, hold my horse." Springing to the ground, he walked to a little distance from his men, with Sir Edward Hungerford.

"Now my good friend," he said, "let me have it in plain words, and as briefly as may suit your courtly nature."

The message, which Hungerford delivered in somewhat circuitous terms, and with many fine

figures of speech, was what Chartley anticipated; and he replied at once—

"I will not baulk him, Hungerford, though good faith, he might have chosen a more convenient season. Yet, I will not baulk him; but as the person challenged, I will dictate my own terms."

"That is your right," said Hungerford, "we can have the cartel fairly drawn out, and signed by each."

"Good faith, no;" answered Chartley, "the first of my conditions is, that there be no cartel. We have no time for fooleries. Events are drawing on, in which all personal petty quarrels must be lost; but still, although I might refuse, and refer our difference to a future time, when peace is restored, yet I will not seek delay, if he will demand no other terms but those, I can grant at once. Thus then, I will have no parade of lists, and witnesses, and marshals of the field; but I will meet him sword to sword, and man to man, my bare breast against his. Alone too, let it be. There is no need of mix-

ing other men in our quarrels. It must be immediate too; for I have not time to wait upon his pleasure. To-morrow at dawn, tell him, I will be alone upon the top of yonder little hill, behind which the moon is just rising if that silver light in the sky speaks truth. There we can see over the country round, so that his suspicious mind cannot fear an ambush. I will be alone, armed as I am now, with sword and dagger only. Let him come so armed likewise, and he shall have what he seeks. These are my conditions, and thereon I give you my hand. Be you the witness of our terms; and if either take advantage, rest shame upon his name."

"I will tell him, my good lord," replied Hungerford, "but I cannot answer he will come; for these conditions are unusual. 'Tis most unpleasant fighting before breakfast. Men have more stomach for a hearty meal, than a good bout of blows."

"Good faith, if he have no stomach for the

meal I offer, he may even leave it," answered Chartley. "'Tis the only time, and only manner that he shall have the occasion. You own yourself, I have a right to name the terms."

"Undoubtedly," replied Hungerford. "Yet still the manner is most uncustomary, and the hour comfortless. If I were a general I would never let my men fight till after dinner. An Englishman gets savage in digestion, owing to the quantity of hard beef he eats, and always should be brought to fight at that hour when he is fiercest. However, as such is your whim, I will expound it to Lord Fulmer; and now my noble lord, I trust you will not hold my act unfriendly, in bearing you this billet, which I will leave with you, although I have delivered the substance."

"Not in the least, Hungerford," replied Chartley. "I believe, like many another man, you are better, wiser, than you suffer yourself to seem."

"Thanks, noble lord," replied the knight,

moving by his side towards their horses; "but there was one important matter, which I forgot to mention, though I have borne it in my mind for several months."

"Ay, what was that?" demanded Chartley, stopping.

"That last night at Chidlow," replied Hungerford, "your doublet was looped awry. Were I you, I would strictly command the valet of my wardrobe, to begin at the lowest loop, and so work upwards; for it has a singular and unpleasant effect upon the eye, to see apparel out of place, especially where slashings and purffling, or bands, or slips, or other regular parts of the garment are out of symmetry. For my part I cannot fancy any fair lady looking love upon such a disjointed garment."

"I will follow your sage advice," replied Charley, laughing; "and now, good night, Hungerford. Another evening I trust to entertain you better."

Thus they parted; and Chartley, putting his

horse to speed, rode after Iola and her companions. They had reached Fazely, however, before he overtook them; and the young lord found the master of his household, with all due reverence, showing the lady Iola to the apartments in the large farm house which had been prepared for her.

The place was not a palace assuredly; but many a little graceful decoration had been added to its plain accommodations, since Chartley's messenger had arrived that evening. Garlands of flowers had been hung above the doors; fresh rushes strewed the floors; and wreaths of box hung upon the sconces.

All was bustle too, in the village. Groups of men in arms were seen lingering about; and merry sounds came from the ale house opposite. Iola's heart, however, sunk a little, when she saw the many signs of approaching warfare, although, those who were to take part therein, and peril life and happiness, seemed to treat it as a thoughtless May-day game. A buxom country girl was waiting to attend upon her; some light refreshments

were spread out in the hall; and when Chartley's step, and Chartley's voice were heard, the momentary sensation of dread passed away; and she felt that the first perils were passed.

An hour, a little hour, they stayed together, in sweet dreamy talk; and then Chartley led her to her chamber, where a bed had also been prepared for the maid. With a kind and gentle adieu, Chartley bade her rest well, that she might be refreshed for their march on the following day, and then returned to hear reports, and give directions.

The next was a busy hour. Orders, enquiries, the receipt of intelligence, the examination of rolls and accounts, filled up the time; and then dismissing all to repose, the young lord sat down to write. Two or three letters were speedily finished: one to Lord Stanley, one to the Earl of Richmond, and one to Sir William Arden. A few brief tender lines to Iola, he folded up and put in his own bosom; after which he wrote some directions upon paper, sealed them, and marked upon the back—"To be opened and

followed if I be not returned by eight of the clock—Chartley."

And then he sat, and leaned his head upon his hand, and thought. He would not retire to rest, lest he should not wake in time; but the hours of the night slipped by; and at length he rose, and broke the slumbers of his drowsy master of his household, who, though startled at seeing his lord by his bed-side, could hardly be brought to understand what was said to him.

"Here, take these orders," said Chartley. "Put them under your pillow for to-night, and see that they be executed at the hour named to-morrow."

"I will, my lord. Yes, my lord, I will," replied the man, rubbing his eyes; and having given him the paper, Chartley procured a cup of cold water, drank it for refreshment after his sleepless night, and then proceeded to the stable. There with his own hands, he saddled his horse; then mounted, and rode away.

CHAPTER XIII.

I know no labour of the body which fatigues so much as agitation of the mind; but the fatigue which it produces is very often of that kind which refuses repose. The mind, in its immortality, does not so easily yield to slumber as its death-doomed companion. More than an hour passed ere Iola slept; but, when she did sleep, it was with the calm and tranquil repose of youth and innocence. Fears she might feel; strong emotions might affect her; dangers, anxieties, and cares she might undergo; but there was no evil act to be regretted, no evil

thought to be combatted. The worm that dieth not was not in the heart. The fire that cannot be quenched had not passed upon the brain. She slept sweetly, tranquilly then; and daylight found her sleeping still.

The light hearted country girl, who lay on the small bed at her feet, slept quietly too; but she had her accustomed hour of waking; and, at that hour, she rose. Her moving in the room roused Iola; and on being informed of the hour, though it was an early one, she said she would rise too, that she might be ready for whatever course Chartley chose to follow. Her toilet was nearly complete, and the girl had left the room some minutes, when she suddenly returned with a look of alarm, saying:

"Oh, lady, there is that terrible looking black man at the door, insisting to speak with you."

Iola waited not to hear more, though the girl was going on to tell her that the whole house was in confusion, but sprang to the door and threw it open, demanding,

"What is it, Ibn Ayoub?"

"There is danger, lady," said the Arab. "My lord gave me charge to guard you to Lichfield in case of strife; and strife is coming."

"But where is your lord?" demanded Iola, with eager alarm in her tone and look.

"It is not known," replied the Arab. "He rode out this morning alone, it is supposed to visit some posts, or see for the men not yet come up. But he commanded me yesterday to guard you safely to Lichfield in any hour of peril. That hour is now. The Lord Stanley with a large force is marching on us; and our people are parlying with his, at the end of the village. They say they will give admission to none, till our lord's return; and Lord Stanley says he will force them. Throw on your hood, lady, and come down. Your horse is ready; and there is a way through the farm, into the fields."

Iola hesitated for a moment; and then,

looking earnestly in the Arab's face, she demanded:

"Did he say that I was to go?"

"By the beard of the prophet, he did," replied Ibn Ayoub.

At the same moment came the blast of a trumpet from no great distance; and the voice of the master of Chartley's household, was heard calling up the stairs, and exclaiming:

"Call the Lady Iola, call the Lady Iola!—Tell her she had better hasten away, out by the other end of the village. Bid her make haste—bid her lose no time."

Iola snatched up her hood from the table; and leaving all the little articles of dress which had been brought with her, scattered about, she hurried down the stairs. All was confusion below; and in vain she tried to obtain some further information concerning Chartley. Most of the men had gone forth at the first news of danger; and there were none but the farmer and his sons, and the master of the household, an elderly and somewhat infirm man, on the

lower story. The latter urged her eagerly to fly; and, hurrying into the court at the back of the house, she was soon mounted on the fleet horse which had borne her thither. Ibn Ayoub seized the bridle. One of the young men opened the great gates behind; and in a minute or two after, Iola found herself amongst the fields and hedgerows, to the east of Fazely. Those hedgerows were then numerous, and in full leaf, hiding the fugitives from all eyes; and for nearly half an hour, the Arab urged the horses on at a quick pace. At first, just as they issued from the village, a number of loud sounds were borne upon the air; and once again a blast of a trumpet was heard. But gradually the sounds became faint, as Iola rode on; and very soon the calm sweet silence of an early summer morning fell over the scene around. Nought was heard but the beating of the horse's feet upon the road, the lowing of some distant cattle, and the singing of a bird. All was peaceful, except poor Iola's heart; and it beat with manifold agitating sensations.

"Let us go slower, Ibn Ayoub," she said. "We must be out of danger now—at least, out of that danger. Let me think, let me think. At this pace, I seem to leave thought behind me."

"Ay, there is no peril now," said the Arab, in his peculiar Oriental tone; "but yet it were well to reach Lichfield as soon as may be; for there, my lord said, he would join us."

"But are you sure you are in the way to Lichfield?" asked Iola. "And are you sure, also, that your lord will be able to join us?—Heaven, what will become of me, if he should not?"

"God is good," said the Arab, reverently laying his hand upon his breast, "and fate is unchangeable. This is the road to Lichfield; so I understood them; but every road has an end; and we shall soon see. Yet let us go slowly. I forgot you are not an Arab."

The way was longer however than the good slave thought, and seemed to Iola interminable. Villages were in those days few in the land;

and many of the towns now existing were then villages. The road they travelled was evidently a small country road, good enough from the dryness of the season, but little frequented, and furnished with none of that convenient information, which tells the traveller of modern times, by an inscription on a tall post, that he must turn to the right to reach one place, or to the left to reach another. The heat was very great too, oppressing both the horses and the riders which they bore; and gradually the bright clear light of the summer morning began to be obscured. A thin filmy veil was drawn over the sky; and, as if forming themselves out of it, the yellowish outlines of gigantic clouds were seen writhing and twisting themselves into a thousand strange fantastic shapes. There was no wind, and yet they moved, and gradually piling themselves up, they seemed to climb one over the other, like the Titans in the strife with Heaven.

"We shall have a storm ere night," said

the Arab; "and you seem weary and alarmed, lady."

"Alarmed I am, but not for the storm, Ibn Ayoub," replied Iola. "It is for your dear lord, I am alarmed. It is this apprehension makes me feel weary, I believe, and the agitation of our sudden departure. Yet the air is terribly oppressive. I feel as if I could hardly breathe;" and she unclasped the sort of collar, called a gorget, which, at that time, formed a part of every lady's dress.

The Arab smiled. "It has but the feeling of spring to me," he said, "though in your cold clime doubtless, it seems hot; but we will find some house where you can get refreshment and a few minutes repose."

"We may obtain information," said Iola; "and that is of more importance. I can very well ride on to Lichfield. It was but six miles, I think they said, from Fazely. By this time, we ought to have seen it, I think."

"True, we have travelled more than six miles," said the man; "but, yet all seems

clear—Nay, there is a house there. I see the roof peeping over the hill; and this must be the gate leading up to it."

They turned along the little farm road, which they saw winding through two neighbouring fields, sloping upwards towards the west; and, as they rose upon the little hill, they attained a more distinct view of a good sized farmer's or franklin's house, with the low sheds and barns, which were then common in England.

"You go first and speak to them, lady," said Ibn Ayoub. "My skin frightens them—as if it needed to be washed in milk, to have a true heart."

He spoke from experience; and judging that he was probably right, Iola rode on to the door, and called to a girl, who was carrying a milk pail through the passage. She instantly set down the pail, and came running out to speak with the beautiful lady who called to her; but the moment she cast her eyes beyond Iola, to the face and figure of Ibn Ayoub, she ran

back into the house with a scream. An elder woman, however, appeared in her place, with a frank, goodhumoured countenance, to whom Iola explained that she had come from Fazely, intending to go to Lichfield, but that, from the distance they had travelled without finding the city, she judged they must have made some mistake.

"Mistake, sweet lady, ay, marry have you," answered the good woman. "Why, you are within four miles of Castle Bromwich; and, I don't know how far from Lichfield—fourteen miles we reckon; and they are good long ones, as I know. But you look tired and pale. Won't you come in and rest? That foolish child was frightened at your tawny Moor; but I'll warrant she'll soon be playing with his golden bracelets."

Iola had turned pale, to find that she was so far distant from the place of her destination. She feared too, that in so long a ride as was now before her, she might fall in with some parties of the troops that were crossing the

country; and, judging that she might obtain some information for her guidance at the farm, she accepted the good woman's offer, and dismounted. Ibn Ayoub led the horses round to a stall at the back of the house; and Iola was soon seated in the kitchen of the cottage, with milk and eggs before her, and the good dame pressing her to her food. There is something in graceful sweetness of manner, which wins upon the rudest and most uncultivated. But, the good farmer's wife was not so. By character kind and cheerful, nature had taught her the best sort of courtesy, and to it had been added an education superior to that of many in her own rank. She could read, and she could write, which was more than one half of the class above her own could do; and she had lived in towns before she married a farmer, which had rendered her polished in comparison with others. It was with the kindness of her heart, however, that Iola had most to do; for there was so much frank sincerity in her hospitality, that Iola was encouraged to place some sort of confidence in

her, and to ask her advice as to her farther course. The opportunity of so doing, was easily found; for the good woman herself was not without that share of curiosity, which is almost uniformly found amongst persons leading a very solitary life; and she asked full as many questions as it was discreet to put. Amongst the rest, how it happened, that a lady like Iola, was going to Lichfield, with only one man to guard her, and he a tawny Moor?

"There were plenty of men to guard me this morning," replied Iola; "but Fazely was menaced by a large body of troops, which the people about me judged to be enemies; and, I was advised to fly as fast as possible, with the good Arab, who is a faithful and devoted attendant of ——"

There Iola paused and hesitated, not knowing how to conclude her sentence, without calling forth inquiries or perhaps exciting suspicions, which might be difficult to answer, and un-

pleasant to endure. But the good woman saved her all pain on the subject.

"There, never mind names," she said. "These are not times for people travelling, to give their names. It may be your husband, it may be your brother, you are talking of; but it is all the same to me. So then, there are two sets of them at Fazely, are there? I heard of some people having mustered there from the west, three or four days ago; but, I did not know there were any others marching up. Are you aware, dear lady—nay, do take another egg: you want refreshment, I can see—are you aware that the earl of Richmond, and all his people are in Lichfield?"

"No, I was not," answered Iola; "but, nevertheless, I must get forward thither as fast as I can; for, there I am to be met by those to whom I must look for assistance and protection; and, what I now fear, is encountering any of the bands of lawless soldiers, who are now roaming about the land."

"Ay, marry, 'tis to be feared you do, riding

so lonely. Why, Castle Bromwich was full of Sir William Stanley's people; but the greater part moved on yesterday to Atherston: two thousand goodly men as you would wish to see, they tell me; one half of them in armour of plate. I know not whether any were left behind, but 'tis very likely; for there is generally what they call a rear guard. Then, there are the king's troops moving from Tamworth towards Leicester. They were to go yesterday. I don't know whether they did. As for that matter, Sir William's are the king's troops too, I suppose."

This intelligence did not serve to cheer Iola very much, for it only showed her more forcibly, than ever, the difficulty she might meet with, in trying to escape from that circle of military operations which were taking place all around her; and, for a moment or two, she looked so disconsolate, that the good woman's pity was moved.

"Ah, poor thing," she said, "I wish I knew what I could do for you. You are too young,

and too gentle, to be exposed to such sort of things. Now, I warrant you, you have seldom stretched your limbs on a hard bed, or eaten homely fare like ours."

"Oh yes, I have, often," replied Iola, with a gayer smile than she had ever assumed since she entered the house; "and very happy was I, when I did so."

"But you are a lady by birth?" said the good woman, with a doubtful look.

"Oh yes," replied the fair girl. "I am the heiress of a high house, my good dame: more's the pity."

"Ay, why more's the pity?" asked the farmer's wife.

"Because flies will come where there is honey," answered Iola; "and many a one seeks riches who cares little for love."

"True, very true," replied the other, with a sigh. "I wish I could help you, dear lady; but I know not how. They took all our horses and carts yesterday, and the men with them, and my husband too, to carry over the

baggage of Sir William's troops to Atherston. If my man had been at home, he would have told you what to do soon enough; for he has got a head, I'll warrant."

"Let us call in the slave, and consult with him," said Iola. "He is faithful and honest; and we trust him much."

Ibn Ayoub was accordingly sought for, and found in the farm-yard, where he had already made such progress in overcoming the prejudices of the farmer's daughter, that she had brought him a bowl of milk with her own hands. Although he spoke English but imperfectly, and understood less what others said, than they understood him, his questions soon elicited from the good farmer's wife and her daughter, who followed him into the room, much more intelligence than Iola had obtained. The girl told them, that people from Bromwich, had been seeking more carts that morning, that a band of Sir William Stanley's men had arrived at the town by daybreak, and were to depart at noon, or before, if they could get carriage.

The farmer's wife remembered too, that one body of them was likely to pass along the very road, upon which she had been about to direct Iola towards Lichfield.

"Can we learn when they have gone by?" asked Ibn Ayoub, in his laconic way.

"Then we could go on at once, when the way is clear," said Iola.

"That were easily done," said the farmer's wife. "The road is not very far. We have a field that overlooks it."

"Send the little cow-boy to feed the cattle by Conyer's copse," suggested the daughter. "There he will see them all pass; and, my life for it, he will go down and talk with some of the archers, and learn what they are doing, and all about it."

"'Tis a good way," said Ibn Ayoub. "Let him not know why he is sent, lest he tell as well as ask."

Such was the course followed. With his dinner put into his wallet, the boy was sent to drive the cattle from the pasture where they were

feeding, to that which overlooked the road; and he was strictly enjoined, if any soldiers went by, and asked whether there were carts or waggons at the farm, to say, no, they had gone to Atherston and not returned, and to come back and tell when they had passed. Iola, it was arranged, should remain where she was, till it was ascertained that this body, at least, had gone by; and when she made some faint excuse for intruding so long upon the good dame's hospitality, her hostess laughed, saying—

"Bless thee, my child, if 'twere for a month, thou art welcome. So thou art safe, I do not care. Come, Jenny, you've got the churning to do; and I have to make the cakes."

All that frank and simple kindness could do, during the next three or four hours, were done by the good woman of the house, to make her fair guest comfortable and at ease. Amongst the most painful periods of life, however, are those when thought and feeling are compelled to strive against each other for the mastery,

when the heart is filled with deep emotions, and yet the external things of life are pressing upon the brain for attention and consideration. Such was now Iola's situation, as she sat meditating upon how she should make her way to Lichfield, through all the difficulties and dangers which surrounded her, while her heart was filled with anxiety for Chartley, and for the result of the struggle which she believed, might be going on at Fazely.

Twelve o'clock, one, two, three o'clock came; and the cow-boy did not return. At last, somewhat anxious in regard to his absence, the farmer's daughter set forth herself to see for him. She found him in the very act of watching a small body of troops, passing from castle Bromwich towards Atherston; and, having looked along the road as far as she could see, she returned to the farm to make her report. It was now agreed that Iola, and her attendant, should still remain for half an hour, as the girl had seen a number of stragglers on

the road; and while Ibn Ayoub went to prepare the horses, the good dame endeavoured, to the best of her power, to give Iola an accurate notion of the various paths she was to follow, to reach Lichfield by the least dangerous roads. Iola bent all her attention to her lesson; but at length, she suddenly interrupted the good woman in her detail, saying—

"Oh, I know that spot well, where there are the three stone mounting steps, and the great cross above them. One road leads to St. Clare, of Atherston, and the other to Tamworth."

"And the little one on the left, straight to Lichfield," replied the good woman. "It is the same distance from each, just seven miles and a furlong. If you were to go on the Tamworth road, you would have Fazely close upon your left. As you go to Lichfield, you will leave it four miles upon your right."

The horses were soon after brought round. The adieus were spoken. The good farmer's wife would receive no recompense, for the entertainment which she had afforded to Iola.

But a small brooch, which the lady took from her hood, and bestowed upon the daughter, was more than compensation, for everything but the kindness and tenderness, which nothing could repay; and, with a motherly blessing upon her head, as she departed, Iola waved her hand, and once more rode upon her journey.

CHAPTER XIV.

On the evening of the nineteenth of August, and at the hour of half-past six, was seen riding alone, through the woodland, then lying about three miles to the right of the direct road from Lichfield to Tamworth, a gentleman mounted on a powerful black horse. No pleasant ride was it he was taking; for by this time, one of those violent thunder storms which so frequently interrupt the brief course of an English summer, and which were both more severe and more frequent when the land was better wooded than it is at present, had broke upon

the earth, after it had been menacing in the sky all the morning. I am fond of describing thunder storms, having watched many a one in all its changes for hours; and there is infinite variety in them too, so that a dozen might be described, and no two alike; but as I have done so more than once before, I would certainly have said nothing of this storm, had it not been an historical one, and connected with an incident of some interest in English history. Suffice it, however, that the thunder seemed to shake the very earth, rattling amongst the trees of the forest as if immense masses of stone had been cast through them by some tremendous engine. The lightning gleamed all around, before, behind, overhead, in amongst the trees, under the green leaves and boughs, seeming to display for an instant all the dark recesses of the forest, as if they had been suddenly lighted up by a thousand torches, and then leaving them in blacker shade than before. For the roar of the thunder, for the flash of the lightning, that traveller would have cared

very little; but for the increasing darkness of the day, which seemed to anticipate the setting of the sun, and for the deluge which poured from the sky, drenching himself, his horse, and his accoutrements, he did care. Had there been any wind, the rain would have been blinding; but it came pouring down in such torrents, straight, even, unceasing, that what between the failing light, the vapour rising from the hot ground, and the incessant dark drops, it was impossible to see for more than a hundred or a hundred and fifty yards along the road.

Yet the traveller turned his head often as he rode, looking hither and thither, wherever any opening in the wood appeared; and he went slowly too, as if he were in no haste, or uncertain of the way. Still as he proceeded, he murmured to himself.

"This is most unfortunate. Perhaps 'twere better to go back; and yet, in this blinding deluge, I might again miss the road, and wander Heaven knows whither. What will they think too? Would to Heaven I had brought the

boy with me! True, he never was in this place in his life before, any more than myself; but he seemed to have an instinct in finding his way."

He rode on for about ten minutes more, and then exclaimed joyfully:

"There are some felled trees! There may be a woodman's cottage or some forest hut near—a horse, upon my life, and a woman's garments under that shed. Woman, with all her faults, is ever a friend to the distressed, a help in the time of peril;" and turning his horse out of the path, he rode quickly over some cleared ground, manœvuring skilfully amongst the felled trees and stumps, with which the spot was encumbered.

His course was directed towards a little open shed, into one side of which, the rain drove furiously; but immediately in the way, at the distance of only a few feet from the shed itself, was a deep sawpit, at either end of which were piles of timber, which he could not pass without going round. Just opposite, however, under the

partial shelter which the shed afforded, was the form he had seen from the road; and close by was the horse, a beautiful animal of pure Arab blood, covered with splendid housings of velvet and gold, which were getting soaked in the descending deluge. All that he could see of the woman was, that, in figure, she was slight and graceful; for her hood was drawn far over her head; and she stood in the farther part of the shed to avoid the rain as much as possible. Her riding suit, however, spoke no lowly station; and it was with a tone of gentlemanly deference that the stranger accosted her

"Pardon me for addressing you, lady," he said; "for necessity compels me to do so; and yet I fear, from finding you taking refuge here, that my application will be fruitless. I have lost my way in this wood; and I would fain know, if I am near Tamworth, or, if there be any place where I can obtain shelter in the neighbourhood."

"You are far from Tamworth," said a sweet

musical voice, "five or six miles at least; and as to shelter, I have just sent an attendant to see if there be any better place than this, within a short distance. I, myself, am not aware of any. He will be back immediately," she added: "or I told him not to go far."

Perhaps there was a little apprehension in the latter part of her reply; for, although the dress of the stranger was that of a high rank, and his demeanour courteous, yet, still he was a stranger; and, to say truth, his features and expression, though not marked by any violent passions, and hardly to be called repulsive were not altogether prepossessing.

"If you will permit me," he said, "I will wait till your attendant returns, and crave a part of the roof that covers you."

What she replied he did not hear; for, at that instant, there was a bright flash of lightning, which caused her to hide her eyes with her hand, followed instantly by a tremendous roar of the thunder, that drowned every other sound. Before the rattling peal had ceased,

for it seemed to go round and round the whole sky, the stranger was by her side, dismounted, and tying his horse at some distance from her own; and Iola, with her eyes unshrouded, was examining his appearance attentively. He was a man in the prime of life, tall and well formed, but spare in person, and somewhat thin in face. The features were good, but somewhat stern in character, with a forehead broad and high, and a slight wrinkle between the brows. The whole expression was grave and thoughtful, with a slight touch of shrewdness, and a cold, inquiring, calculating eye. The second look, however, was more satisfactory to Iola than the first had been. That grave, even stern, looking man, was far more acceptable to her, as a companion at that moment, than one of the gay, light flutterers of the court would have been. When his horse had been secured, the stranger pulled off his hat, which was of a foreign fashion, and shook the wet from the broad border and the plume; and then turning to the lady, he said:

"I fear I break in upon your privacy; but I am sure your kindness will forgive it, and trust that, if you have it in your power to give me any information or direction, you will do so. Your own heart will thank you; for it will be indeed a charity; and I shall be most grateful."

"I know nothing of your need, sir," replied Iola. "All you have told me, is your wish to reach Tamworth, which is far. If you will tell me what other information you may want, I will give it willingly, though I know but little with any certainty."

"Business of importance, indeed, carries me to Tamworth," he answered; "and I ought to have been there ere now; but we live in dangerous times, and the country is in a troublous state, so that, at every step, one may stumble upon some body of hostile troops."

"That is true," replied Iola; "for I am seeking, myself, to get beyond these two lines of adversaries. If I knew which you had to fear, perhaps I might give you information."

The stranger smiled. "Can you not tell

me in general terms, what you know of the two armies?" he asked. "Then I can judge."

"You fear to speak your faction to me," answered Iola; "and therein you do me wrong; for, believe me, if you were king Richard himself, I would not betray you to your enemy; nor, if the earl of Richmond, to king Richard. Yet, perhaps, you are wise to keep your own counsel."

"I have always found it so," said the other, with a laugh. "Not that I doubt you, dear lady; for you do not look like one who would injure any one. But you can, as I have said, tell me generally."

"Well, then I learn," said Iola, "that the king is at Leicester with a large force, the earl of Richmond at Lichfield; Sir William Stanley, on his march to join the king, moved yesterday to Atherston; and the Lord Stanley sought to pass through Fazely this morning, just between us and Tamworth. Whether he passed or not I cannot tell."

"Retiring before the earl of Richmond's

army," said the stranger, musing. "But why think you he did not pass?"

"Because there were other troops in the village," answered Iola, "some three or four hundred men, I learned, under the Lord Chartley."

"Then is Chartley at Fazely?" exclaimed the other, with a glad look. "How far is Fazely hence, dear lady?"

"About three or four miles I am told," answered Iola; "but I know not that Lord Chartley is there now. When I came thence this morning, the troops of Lord Stanley demanded admission, and were refused. Strife was likely to ensue; and I was told to fly and seek safety at Lichfield."

"Then now I know who you are," said the stranger, taking her hand; "the Lady Iola St. Leger. Is it not so? I am a friend of Lord Chartley's; and he wrote to me, that he and you would be at Lichfield to night."

Iola blushed, she hardly knew why, and when the thunder had ceased echoing, replied,

"You have guessed right, sir; but I knew not that Lord Chartley had written to any one. May I not know your name?"

The stranger paused for a moment thoughtfully, and then answered. "You will think me discourteous; but yet, methinks, the rule I have laid down, it were best to adhere to. Much depends upon prudence in my case; and it were better to be over discreet than rash."

"Then, my good lord, I know you too," replied Iola, with one of her gay looks, beaming up for an instant, and then disappearing again like a meteor over the night sky. "Shall I tell you whom I believe you to be?"

"No," replied the stranger. "That might make me more discourteous still, and neither answer yes or no to your surmise. But deal with me merely as a friend of the Lord Chartley's, who wishes him well—as one linked in the same cause with him, whose enemies are his enemies, and let me hear anything you may judge necessary for me to know."

"I am quite sure I am right," answered Iola; "although it is a mystery to me, how you came hither alone, unattended, and certainly in a place of danger."

"Good faith, it is a mystery to me too," replied the other; "but a simple mystery, dear lady, and a foolish one. The truth is, I lost my way. Now tell me, think you from what you know, that I can cross safely from this place to Tamworth?"

"No, indeed, my lord," replied Iola. "Lord Stanley's troops are most likely in possession of Fazely; for, I much fear that Lord Chartley's men would be soon overpowered."

"Then, why did Chartley refuse to let him pass?" demanded the stranger. "All that Stanley could desire, was to retreat in peace; but he was compelled to clear a passage, at any risk, otherwise the earl's army would cut him off from the king's host."

"Lord Chartley was not there," said Iola. "He had gone forth, they informed me, early in the morning, and had not then returned; but, I

can tell you little of the matter, for orders had been left, to hurry me away, in case of danger. However, if even you could pass Fazely, and could reach Tamworth, you would be in more danger still; for parties of the king's troops were in possession of that place, at a late hour last night."

"They have been removed farther back," said the stranger, nodding his head significantly; "and Stanley is in full retreat too, if this unfortunate affair has not delayed him. Yet, it would be dangerous to attempt to pass," he continued, musing; "for there is something strange here; and one error were fatal. I must have farther intelligence, before I act."

"I trust we may have some soon," answered Iola; "for I know the slave will not return, without gathering tidings, if it be possible to get them. I wish he would come, for, though it thunders less, the evening is growing dark."

"Be not alarmed," replied the stranger. "As far as one arm can, I will protect you, lady. I hold that point of chivalry, to be the

great and most essential one, without which valour is the mere brute courage of a bull, that teaches us to right the wronged, and to protect the weak."

"I trust you are reserved for nobler things than even that, my lord," replied Iola, "and would not have you risk your life in my defence. 'Tis only, that I may have to ride to Lichfield, through this dark, stormy night, which makes me fear."

"Better not ride to Lichfield, at all," replied the stranger, "for Lord Chartley's plans must have been altered by one circumstance or another. He knew not that the earl of Richmond was to be at Tamworth this night."

"I am but as a soldier, noble lord," replied Iola, with a faint smile, "and must obey my orders—But, hark! I hear a horse's feet—my faithful Arab, come to bring me news."

"God send the tidings be good," said her companion; and advancing to the other end of the shed, he exclaimed: "Heaven, what is this? In this twilight, it seems like a spectre in a shroud!"

The next instant, Ibn Ayoub rode up to the side of the shed, and sprang to the ground casting the bridle free upon his horse's neck. He glared for an instant at the stranger, with his black eyes flashing with eagerness; and, then turning to Iola, he put his hand upon his head, saying: "I have been long, lady; but, I could not help it. There is neither house nor hut, for a mile and a half: and Heaven was sending down streams of fire and water all the way."

"But what news from Fazely, Ibn Ayoub? What news from Fazely?" asked Iola, eagerly.

The Arab gave a glance to the stranger; and she added: "Speak, speak! You may speak freely. This gentleman is a friend. I know him."

"Well then, lady, bad news," answered the Arab. "Lord Stanley had taken the place, and gone on to Atherston. His rear guard held it still, however."

"But was there strife?" asked Iola, in eager terror.

"No," answered the Arab. "They dealt in words it seems; and when they found that this lord had two thousand men and they but three hundred, they gave up the place, upon condition that they might have half an hour to go whithersoever they would."

"But your lord, your lord?" asked Iola. "Had you no tidings of him?"

"God is good; I heard not of him," said Ibn Ayoub. "The woman of the house is all for king Richard, and could talk of nought but what Lord Stanley did, and told me how Lord Fulmer's force had marched out of Tamworth, going to join the king, and now lay a few miles off at a place they call Pondhead."

"What shall we do then?" demanded Iola, in a tone of fear and bewilderment. "I know not where Pondhead is; and it may lie straight in our way to Lichfield."

"You had better come to that house," said Ibn Ayoub, "and rest there for the night. The woman has a heart, though 'tis turned the wrong way; and the lad, her son, seems a good

youth. When I told her a lady was here in the wood, she cried out at once, to bring you there for shelter, and offered all her house could afford, without asking whether you were for the king or the earl. I told her afterwards, indeed, that your uncle was at the court, and high in favour. I would not tell a lie; but that was the truth and could do no harm."

"Much good," said the stranger, now joining in the conversation for the first time. "I fear this storm will last all night; and you must have shelter. So, indeed, must I, for I must not venture rashly to Tamworth till I hear more. I will now seek a boon at your hands. Let me go with you, as one of your attendants. Pass me as such on the good woman of the house—"

"You, my lord—you!" cried Iola; "will you venture thither?"

"Even so," he answered, calmly, "if you will so far favour me as to take me with you. I may return the kindness another day. If you have any fear, however, that I may bring danger on you, I will not go."

"Oh no, 'twas not for that I feared," replied Iola. "'Twas the great risk to yourself, I thought of."

"No great risk, I trust," answered the other. "My face will not betray me in this part of the world. The night is too nigh for strangers to come in; and what this good man has said will smooth the way for us. I can talk deftly of the good Lord Calverly, and speak of Richard's overwhelming force, and Richmond's little band, as calm and scornfully as Lovell or Catesby, nor ever seem to think that right and justice, and God's vengeful strength can make head against a glittering army, and a kingly crown. Let us go on. I can play my part well. Do not forget yours, however. Speak to me, order me as a gentleman of your uncle's household, and above all, forget the words, my lord. This night at least, we will dry our garments by the fire.—To-morrow, my resting place may be a damper one."

"But by what name shall I call you?" asked Iola.

"Call me Harry—Harry Vane," answered her companion, "but I beseech you, remember that all depends on care and prudence; and if I make any mistake in my due service, rate me well. Be a mere shrew towards me, for this night, though you be gentle as a dove to my good friend, Lord Chartley."

With many doubts and apprehensions, Iola yielded to the plan, and mounting her horse, rode through the still pouring rain, with the stranger by her side and Ibn Ayoub directing them on the way. Many things were arranged as they went; and the good Arab cautioned, which indeed he did not require. They did not reach the door of the house, to which he led them, before the sun had completely set; but as they turned towards the west, they saw a golden gleam on the horizon's edge, and showing that the storm was breaking away.

Timidly, Iola opened the door of the house, which was a large one for the times and the class of people to which it belonged, while the Arab gathered the bridles

of the horses on his arm, and the stranger followed a step behind the lady. The scene within alarmed her more than ever; for it was not like the little quiet farm house she had visited in the morning. The outer door opened at once into the kitchen, a large dingy room well grimed with smoke; and round a table sat three or four stout, heavy looking, countrymen, together with a handsome youth, somewhat better dressed, while two or three young girls were working busily at various household matters, and a stout dame, with gown tucked up, was taking off, with her own hands, a heavy pot, from a hook that suspended it above the fire.

"Hey, mother, mother!" cried the young man, turning round his head, "here's the lady the brown man told you of."

"Ha," said the good woman, setting down the pot and gazing at Iola with a look of wonder, either at her beauty, or the richness of her apparel. "Well, I wot you are not fit, my

lady, to pass the night in woods and thunder-storms."

"No, indeed," answered Iola. "One of my attendants told me you would kindly give me shelter for the night; and I will most gladly pay for any accommodation I receive. I was making my way to Lichfield, thinking to escape from all these scenes of strife; but it is too late, I find, to go on."

"Ay, that it is," answered the bluff dame; and, at the same moment, the stranger whispered—

"A prouder tone, a prouder tone."

"Set me a seat by the fire, Harry Vane," said Iola, with a somewhat queenly manner; "and then call in the slave. He is wetter than we are."

The stranger hastened to obey; and the good woman of the house laid fresh wood upon the fire, aided to remove Iola's hood and cloak, and offered all attention.

The loftier tone had its effect; for it is a sad truth, that nothing is obtained in this world—

not even respect—without exaction. Modest merit! alack and a well-a-day, who seeks for it? and if not sought, it cannot be found. One's pretensions should ever be a little more than one's right—not too much indeed, for then, we shock our great chapman, the world—but always enough to allow for abatement. The world will always make it; and such is worldly wisdom.

However that may be, there was no lack of kindness and hospitality. The guests were entertained with the best which the house afforded; the horses were fed and tended under Ibn Ayoub's own eye; for they were to him as children; and the good dame and her daughters, busied themselves to provide for Iola's comfort, tendering dry garments of their own, with many apologies for their coarseness, and admissions that they were unfit for such a great lady to wear.

While she was absent from the room, submitting to these cares, her son conversed with the stranger; and even the ploughmen joined in to ask

questions concerning the movements of the armies, and their probable result. He played his part well, and with a shrug of the shoulders said, nobody could tell what might be the event. Richmond's army was but a pitiful handful, it was true; but it was increasing daily, and if the king did not force him to a battle soon, the two hosts might be nearly equal. Then again, he added, suspicions were entertained that some of the great nobles were not well affected to the king.

"Why does not the earl of Northumberland bring up his forces?" he asked. "It is well known that he could lead six or seven thousand men into the field; and there they are, either lingering in the North, or advancing by such slow marches, that a dozen battles might be fought while they are on the way. For my part, I hold it better not to be over zealous for any one. None can tell who may win at this rough game of war; and the lower ones are always losers. If we take the luckless side, then we have fines and confiscations for our pains, and if we help the winner

we get but cold thanks, when he has secured the game. I will have nought to do with it, and was right glad when I was sent to guard my young lady to Lichfield."

About an hour and a half was passed, in a hurried desultory kind of way; and then Iola sought repose. The stranger was provided with a bed in a room below; and a sleeping place was offered to Ibn Ayoub in a room over the stables. He would not use it however; but bringing in some dry straw, he placed it across Iola's door, and there lay down to rest. There might be a struggle in his mind, between her and the horses; but duty won the day.

For the next six hours Iola rested indeed, but slept little; for the spirit was busy if the body found repose. Whatever faith and trust in God may do, we all know that there are sufferings to be endured, from which our mortal nature shrinks, evils to be undergone that wring the heart of clay; and though 'twere wiser never to dream they may be, till they are, importunate experience will not let us rest in such

bright though fanciful security. If imagination be vivid, all probable, all possible ills are called up to frighten us. If reason be predominant, still we count the numbers of those enemies, to meet them as we may. Iola's thoughts were of Chartley all the night long. Waking, she tormented herself with doubt and apprehension for his safety, and sleeping, she dreamed of him, and fancied he was in captivity or dead. It was a relief to her when morning dawned; and she rose. The house was soon in all the busy bustle of a country life; and people were heard coming and going long before Iola had quitted her room.

When at length she went down, however, she found all the men absent on their work; and the first greeting of the good dame was, "Ah, lady, lucky you stopped here, or you might have been caught. The earl of Richmond and his rabble are all in Tamworth and the villages round. Fazely is full of his men; and Lord Stanley has retreated to Atherston. However, if you go on the road you were travelling, you will now get to Lichfield quite

safe ; for they march on quite orderly 'tis said ; more so than our own people do, indeed."

"How many are there ?" asked Iola. "Have you heard ?"

"Well, nigh twenty thousand men, they say," replied the good woman ; "but there is never believing such tales. Now, I will help you to break your fast in a minute, and send you on your way ; for there is no knowing whether we may not have some of the rebels here before long."

"Where are my servants ?" asked Iola. "They must have some food too."

"Oh, they will come, they will come," said the dame. "They are looking to the horses. Mag, go and call them."

The meal was soon despatched, the horses brought round, and Iola's purse produced to make payment for her entertainment. Here, it was not refused ; for the mistress of the house was a prudent and careful person, who lost no opportunity of taking money where she could.

They rode away with many adieus and wishes

for their fair journey; and the morning was bright and clear. But as soon as they had reached the public road again, Iola checked her horse, saying, "Ride on a few yards, Ibn Ayoub;" and then turning to the stranger, she added, "I know not whether the information is to be depended on, my lord; but the good woman told me just now, that the earl of Richmond's army is at Tamworth, and the villages round, even at Fazely. All king Richard's troops are withdrawn, she says. So, if you can trust her report, your way is clear."

"I saw a peasant come in from the north with a load of wood," said the stranger; "but I did not venture either to stay or ask any questions; for the man eyed me strongly. Be the tale true or false, however, the result must be risked. I can be no longer absent. To you, dear lady, I have to return my most sincere thanks, for giving me what aid you could in a very dangerous situation."

"Speak not of that, my lord," replied Iola; "but yet one word before you go. I am terri-

fied and apprehensive regarding Lord Chartley. I know not what may have befallen him. I do beseech you, if you can find time when you reach Tamworth, inquire into his fate, and should you find him in difficulty, or danger, aid him to the best of your power. It would quiet many a painful thought too, if I could have intelligence at Lichfield."

"I promise you upon my faith and word, dear lady," said her companion riding closer, and kissing her hand, "nought shall be left undone to aid him to the best of my power. Ay, and I will send you news too. So, now farewell; and God's protection be around you."

"And you," said Iola. Thus they parted.*

* This singular adventure of the earl of Richmond, when on his way between Lichfield and Tamworth, and the fact of his passing the night at a farm house, are not inventions of a romance writer, but historical facts.

CHAPTER XV.

Come back with me, dear reader, come back with me both in time and space; for we must return to the morning before, and to the little hill-top—not far from the spot where the road to Tamworth and to Fazely separates, over which—at that time, spread brown turf, green gorse, and a few patches of stunted heath, with here and there a hawthorn, rugged and thorny, like a cankered disposition. There is a man on horse-back at the top of the mound; and he looks, first eagerly towards Tamworth, then at the sun, just rising over the distant slopes. Lo, two or three

horsemen coming on the road from Tamworth! All stop but one, and turn back. The one comes forward at fiery speed, quits the road, gallops up the hill, and stands fronting the other.

"Good morrow, my Lord Fulmer," said Chartley. "I am here alone. No one knows of my being here. You have brought men with you along the road."

"They have gone back to Tamworth," replied Lord Fulmer, with a look of fierce satisfaction upon his brow. "I take no advantage, Lord Chartley. It is quite satisfaction enough to me, to have you here at my sword's point without my seeking to punish you otherwise. Come draw my lord, and take your last look of earth; for either you or I quit not this spot alive."

"On horseback then?" said Chartley. "So be it;" and he drew his sword.

Lord Fulmer wheeled his horse a little, to gain ground, and then spurred furiously on his adversary, his strong charger coming forward with tremendous force. Chartley's was a lighter

horse, but far more agile ; and knowing that it would not stand the shock, he drew the right rein, and struck the beast's flank with the left spur. The horse passaged suddenly to the right ; and Lord Fulmer was borne past, aiming a blow at Chartley's head as he went. The other however parried it with a cool smile, and then wheeling suddenly upon him, in a manner he had learned in other lands, met him, in the act of turning, and striking him in the throat with the pommel of his sword, hurled him backwards out of the saddle.

The moment this was done, he sprang to the ground ; but Fulmer was already on his feet, and ready to attack his adversary sword in hand.

" A pitiful mountebank's trick," he cried, " unworthy of a knight and gentleman."

" I would fain spare your life, boy," cried Chartley, somewhat angry at his insulting words.

" I will not hold it at your pleasure," returned Fulmer, attacking him furiously, with his dagger

in one hand, and his sword in the other. The combat was now somewhat more equal, though Chartley was the stronger man, and the better swordsman; but, to use a common expression, he gave many a chance away, unwilling that men should say he had slain Lord Fulmer, to obtain his contracted bride. For several minutes he stood upon the defensive, watching an opportunity to wound or disarm his foe. But even a calm and patient spirit, which Chartley's was not, will get heated under strife like that. Soon he began to return the blows; and the contest waxed fierce and strong; but even in his heat, Chartley forgot not his skill; and Fulmer did. A conviction, a dark and fearful conviction, which vanity had hidden from him before, that he was no match for the man to whom he was opposed, began to mingle with his anger, The blows that fell about him like rain, the thrusts that he could hardly parry, confused his mind and dazzled his sight. He was driven round and round, back upon the side of the hill, where the footing was unsteady; and then, sud-

denly he felt his guard beat down; a strong grasp was laid upon his throat; and once more he was hurled prostrate on the turf. His sword was lost, the hand which held his dagger mastered; and when he looked up, he saw the blade of Chartley's *misericorde* raised high and gleaming above his head. Chartley paused for an instant. The better spirit came to his aid; and, still holding tight the fallen man's left wrist, with his knee upon his chest, he brushed back the curls of hair from his own forehead, with the hand that held the dagger. At that instant he heard a sound behind him, which, in the eagerness of the strife he had not before noticed; and in an instant his arms were seized.

Shaking off the grasp laid upon him, as he started up, he turned fiercely and indignantly round. Ten or twelve men on foot and horseback, were now around him; and, with a withering glance at Lord Fulmer, who by this time had risen on his knee, Chartley exclaimed, "Cowardly traitor, is this your good faith?"

"On my honour, on my soul!" exclaimed

Lord Fulmer, rising and passing his hand across his eyes, as if his sight were dim, "I have no share in this. These people are none of mine."

"What would you, sirs?" exclaimed Chartley as the men advanced towards him again, "Keep back, for I am not to be laid hands on lightly."

"Stay, stay," cried one of the men on horseback, riding forward. "Your name is Lord Chartley, or I much mistake—nay, I know it is; for I have seen you often at the court. Yield to the king's officer. I am commanded to apprehend you, and carry you to the nearest post of the royal troops. We have pursued you hither from St. Clare, and have come just in time, it seems. Do you yield, my lord, or must I use force?"

Resistance was in vain; and with a heavy heart, Chartley replied, "I yield, of course, to the king's pleasure. What have I done that should cause his grace to treat me thus?"

"He was informed, my lord," replied the officer, "that you were leading your men straight to the army of the rebel Richmond."

"Or rather you should say, straight towards the forces of the good Lord Stanley. Upon my life 'twill make a goodly tale, to hear that the king imprisons those who go to meet his foes, and honours those who run away before them."

"There are some other matters too against you, sir," replied the officer. "Reports have come from a good man, lately the bailiff of the abbey of St. Clare, tending to show that you have had schemes in hand, contrary to the king's good pleasure. If you were going to Lord Stanley, however, in that matter you can soon exculpate yourself, as into his hands I shall deliver you, his being the nearest force at this moment. Pray mount your horse, my lord. Some one take up his sword and give it me."

During all this time, Lord Fulmer had stood by, with his eyes bent down and his arms folded; but now, as if with a sudden emotion, he started forward to Chartley's side, exclaiming, "Upon my honour and my conscience, I have had nought to do with this."

Chartley sprang into the saddle, and gave

him a look of scorn, saying, "My noble lord, it is mighty strange they should know the day, and hour, and place where to fall on me, many against one. Had I not come hither to meet you, they would have found me with good three hundred spears, and might have bethought them once or twice, before they judged it fit to tell me such a tale.—Now, sir, which way? I am your humble varlet."

"To the right," said the officer; and the whole party moved on upon the road to Atherston.

Chartley was in no mood for conversation; but with his head bent, and his heart full of bitter disappointment, he rode slowly forward with the soldiers, half inclined, at the turning of every road they passed, to put spurs to his horse, and see whether he could not distance his captors. But, as if judging that such an attempt was likely, wherever an opportunity presented itself, one of the soldiers rode forward to his right hand or his left; and he saw that several of the

footmen, who were archers, kept their bows bent and their arrows on the string.

At length there was a sound of horse, coming at a quick pace behind; and a party of some two hundred men, all clad in glittering armour, and bearing a banner at their head, rode by at a rapid trot, going in the same direction as themselves, and only turning their heads to look at the small party as they passed by.

The officer, however, who rode by Chartley's side, instantly shouted loudly, "Lord Stanley, Lord Stanley!" and then spurred on. Chartley saw him speak to a gentleman at the head of the other troop, who seemed to wait and to listen with impatience; for his gestures were quick and sharp, and he soon rode on again. The officer immediately returned, and ordering the archers to follow as speedily as they might, he said, "Now, my lord, we must gallop forward to Atherston."

He then put his troop at once into a more rapid pace, and rode after the body of horse which had gone on.

"Did Lord Stanley say aught regarding me?" asked Chartley, when they had nearly overtaken the others.

"Aye, my lord, he did," replied the officer, in a gruff tone. "He said your men opposed the passage of his force through Fazely this morning, but that he had driven them out, and let them go, for friends or enemies 'twas no matter, they were but a handful."

"'Twas by no orders of mine," answered Chartley. "Had I been there, it would not have happened."

"That you must explain yourself, my lord," answered the officer. "I only do my duty, and that with no good will."

At the pace they went, a very short space of time brought them to Atherston; and at the door of an old-fashioned inn, which then stood there, and in which Chartley had lodged for some weeks, Lord Stanley sprang to the ground, saluted by a number of gentlemen and soldiers, by whom the little town was already occupied. He spoke for a moment or two to one of them, and then entered the inn, saying aloud, "That

will do—only set a guard;" and the gentleman whom he addressed immediately advanced to the spot where Chartley still sat upon his horse, saying, "Your lordship must follow me. I am sorry that I must place a guard over you."

"Can I not speak with Lord Stanley?" demanded Chartley.

"Not at present, my good lord," replied the gentleman. "He is full of business. The king marches from Leicester to-morrow; and we must not be tardy."

Chartley made no reply, but followed in bitter silence, passing through the groups of gazing idlers round the inn-door, to a room up one flight of stairs, where some of his own servants used to sleep. There he was left alone, with the door locked and barred upon him. A moment after, he heard the tread of a sentry, and then the voice of some one speaking from a window to a person in the street, and saying, "Hie away to the king, and tell him you have caught him. Beseech his grace to send me orders what I am to do with him; for I have no instructions.

Add that I will send in our muster-roll to-night."

Chartley mused over what he heard. The words evidently applied to him; and he asked himself what would be the result of the message. The fate of Gray, Vaughan, Hastings, Rivers, Buckingham, warned him of what was likely to befal him: short shrift and speedy death. All the bright visions had vanished, the gay and sparkling hopes that danced in his bosom on the preceding night were still. If death is terrible, how much more terrible when he comes to put his icy barrier between us and near anticipated joys. Chartley could have died in the field with hardly a regret, but the cold, unhonoured death of the headsman's axe, the inglorious, unresisting fall: it was full of horrors to him. Yet he nerved his spirit to bear it as became him; and he communed with and schooled his own heart for many a live long hour. The minutes crept on minutes; the shadow wandered along the wall; a thunderstorm closed the day; and the rain poured down in torrents. Chartley

marked not the minutes, saw not the shadow, hardly heard the storm that raged without. He thought of Iola; and he asked his heart, "What will become of her?"

They brought him food; but he hardly tasted it, and wine, but he knew there was no consolation there; and when the sun went down, he crossed his arms upon his chest, and gazing forth from the window, said to himself, "Perchance it is the last that will ever set for me."

Shortly after, a light was brought him; and he asked if he could get paper and pen and ink; but the man went away, saying he would see, and did not return.

The whole night passed. There was no bed in the room; and though once or twice his eyes closed in sleep for a few minutes, with his arms leaning on the table, yet it was but to wake up again with a start. The next morning dawned fair; but for some hours no one came near him. At length food was again brought; but the man who carried it, either would not or could not answer any questions; and the day rolled on,

chequered by sounds and sights in the streets, such as commonly are heard and seen in a small town filled with soldiery.

It was a long and weary day, however; and Chartley's heart fell under the most wearing of all things—unoccupied solitude; but, at length, the sky grew gray, and night and darkness came on.

Nearly an hour then passed in utter silence; and the whole house seemed so quiet that Chartley could hardly imagine that Lord Stanley and his train still remained there. But at the end of that time, he heard a quick step, the challenge of the sentry at his door, and then the password, "The Crown." The next instant the door opened, and Lord Stanley himself appeared.

There was but slight acquaintance between him and Chartley; and his brow was thoughtful and anxious, boding no good, the young nobleman thought.

"I grieve, my lord," he said, closing the door behind him, "that it has not been in my power

to see you sooner, and grieve still more to be your jailer; but I have no choice, and better perhaps it is, that you should fall into my hands than those of an enemy."

"Much better," answered Chartley, courteously; "but imprisonment is hard at any time; and now, I have a pass under your own hand sent me by a mutual friend. I beseech you to think of this circumstance, and not to detain me here, to my peril and great loss of time."

Lord Stanley seemed a good deal agitated, by feelings he did not explain; for he walked once or twice up and down the room without reply; and Chartley went on to say, "I have not mentioned this pass, or the letter which accompanied it, to any one, lest by so doing I might injure you much, and a cause I have much at heart."

Stanley approached close to him, and laid his hand upon his arm, replying with great earnestness, but in a very low tone, "My dear lord, I freely tell you, that I would let you escape within half an hour, were the danger only to myself; but the truth is, my son's life is in peril. The

king keeps him as a hostage at the court. He is never for a moment out of some one's sight, and if I but trip in the hazardous path I have to tread, I am made childless in an hour. But tell me, my good lord, how happened it that your men refused me a passage through Fazely yesterday ?"

"I know not," answered Chartley, "some foolish mistake, I suppose, for I myself was not present ;" and he proceeded to relate all that had occurred to him since he left Fazely.

"'Tis most unfortunate," said Stanley ; "but still, till the very last moment, I must either obey the orders of the king, whatever they may be, or be the murderer of my own child. If he should bid me put you in still stricter confinement, or send you on at once to him—which were indeed ruin to my hopes for you—yet I must obey. The mere confinement here is no great evil. Your men have by this time joined the earl of Richmond ; and though, doubtless, you would wish to lead them yourself, yet if you lose glory, you will escape some danger and hard blows."

"Ay, my good lord," said Chartley, "but there are other perils too. What, if Richard orders you to put me to death?"

"You must have form of trial," said Stanley.

"None was granted to Buckingham, nor to many another I could name," answered the young nobleman.

"Now God forefend," cried his companion; "but yet, my lord, think what a son's life is to a father, and judge in my situation what I could do—Hark!" he added, "there is a horse's feet below. Perchance it is the messenger returned. We shall soon know."

An interval of gloomy silence succeeded; each listening with anxious and attentive ear. They could hear some words spoken, but could not distinguish what they were. Then came a step upon the somewhat distant stairs, and then in the passage. The sentry gave the challenge; and some one in a rough, loud tone, demanded to speak with Lord Stanley, adding, "They say he is up here."

Stanley instantly rose and went out, and Chartley could hear him demand, though in a low voice, "Well, what says the king?"

"As to the musters, my lord, he says that noon to-morrow will be time enough," replied the same rough tone; "and as to the prisoner, he says, 'Strike off his head before breakfast; there are proofs of treason against him.'"

Stanley muttered something to himself which Chartley did not hear; and then came a pause; but at length the steps were heard receding, and Lord Stanley did not again appear.

"It is determined," said Chartley to himself. "Well, death can come but once. What matters it, the axe, or the spear point? but yet poor Iola! This room is very hot, I shall be stifled here, and disappoint them;" and walking to the window, he threw it open and looked out.

The room was a considerable height above the street; and to leap or drop from it might have risked the breaking of a leg or of a neck.

Nevertheless, Chartley perhaps might have tried it; but there was a still more serious impediment. Two sentinels were stationed at the door, and walked up and down before the house, passing and repassing beneath his window. There were numerous groups, too, talking together in the narrow road, notwithstanding the darkness of the night, which, though fair and starlit, was quite moonless. A lantern passed along from time to time; and Chartley easily conceived that there would not be much repose in Atherston till dawn. The hope of escape faded.

In a few minutes the sound of horses' feet were heard at some distance. They came nearer and nearer; and Chartley could just see the figures of three mounted men ride up to the house, and there draw in the rein.

The foremost, without dismounting, asked the sentry, "Is the Lord Stanley quartered here?"

"Yes," replied the man; "but he is gone to repose, I think."

"Tell him I am a messenger from his brother, bringing news of importance, which must be delivered to himself alone," said the other.

As he spoke he began to dismount slowly; and while one of the two men who accompanied him took the bridle, the third sprang with great alacrity to hold the stirrup, showing, as Chartley thought, reverence somewhat extraordinary for a mere messenger. The soldier at the door called out somebody from within, who seemed to be a domestic servant of Lord Stanley's; and the moment the man beheld the messenger's face, he said, "Oh, come in, sir, come in. My lord will see you instantly." The stranger followed him into the house, while his two companions walked his horse up and down the road.

About half an hour elapsed ere the messenger came out again; and then springing on his horse at once, he rode away at a quick pace.

A few minutes after this, Chartley's dark reve-

ries were interrupted by two men bringing in a truckle bed; for there had been none in the room before. One of them was a servant of the inn, whom the young lord knew well by sight, and had been kind to. The man, however, took not the least notice of him, any more than if he had been a stranger; and, saying to himself, "Fortune changes favour," the young nobleman turned to the window again.

A minute or two sufficed to set up the bed in its place; and then the servant of the inn said to the other man, "Go fetch the blankets and the pillow; they are at the end of the passage, I think."

The moment he was gone and the door closed, the man started forward and kissed Lord Chartley's hand.

"Comfort, comfort, my lord," he said. "The headsman may sharpen his axe; but it is not for you. Look under the pillow when I am gone: keep your window open and watch. But do not be rash nor in haste. Wait till you have

a signal;" and then starting back to his place, he began to stretch the cross bars of the bed out a little farther.

A minute or two after, the other man returned loaded with bedding, which was soon disposed in order; but just as they were retiring again, the servant of the inn seemed to see something amiss about the pillow, and returned for an instant to put it straight, after which the two left the room together. The key was turned; the bolt was shot; and Chartley, putting his hand under the pillow, drew forth a billet, folded and sealed. It bore no address, and contained but few words. They were as follows:

"The sentinels at the gate will be removed at midnight. Blankets and sheets have made ropes before now; and a grey horse, whose speed you know, stands half a mile down the road. Turn to the right after your descent. Before you go, in justice to others, burn the pass and the letter which came with it; and if you understand these directions, extinguish your light at eleven."

"Who could the letter come from?" Chartley asked himself. "It was neither the handwriting, nor the composition of an inn chamberlain, that was clear," and taking out the pass, he compared the writing of the two. There was a very great similarity.

Chartley's heart beat high again; but as he gazed upon the two papers, the clock struck ten. "Two long hours!" he thought, "two long hours!" How wearisome seemed the passing of the time. But it did pass; and when he calculated that eleven o'clock was drawing near, he approached the pass to the flame of the lamp. It caught and burned; but ere the whole was consumed, there came across the prisoner's mind a doubt—a suspicion. It was the only hold he had upon Lord Stanley; a paper which proved, that nobleman had connived at his march to join the earl of Richmond; a paper which he dared not order to be taken from him by force lest it should discover its own secret. The next instant, however, nobler thoughts succeeded. "Away, injurious suspicions!" he

said, and casting the paper down upon the floor, he suffered it to consume, and then trampled out the sparks with his foot. The letter from Richmond, which had accompanied it, shared the same fate; and then he waited and watched for the stroke of eleven. It was longer than he had thought it would be; and at length he began to fancy that the clock had stopped.

Presently after, there was a stroke of the hammer on the bell: another, and another, and another. The tale was complete; and he blew out the light. Then placing himself at the window, he watched. The road was now nearly deserted. In a house opposite, there was a candle burning; but it was extinguished in a few minutes. A small body of soldiers passed along with measured tramp. Next came a drunken man, brawling and shouting till his voice was lost in the distance. A deep, silent pause succeeded. Chartley could have counted the beatings of his own heart. Then a man passed by, singing a low plaintive air in a sweet

voice, and his footfalls sounded as if he were somewhat lame. After that, there was another longer pause, and all was still again. Then came a little noise in a distant part of the inn, which soon subsided, and silence reigned supreme. It lasted long; and Chartley, thinking the hour must be near, tied the clothing of the bed together, and fastened the end to a hook and bar fixed into the wall for the purpose of suspending a sconce. It was but a frail support for the weight of a strong man; but he thought, "It will break the fall at least." When that was done, he sat down in the window seat again, and watched. Oh, the slow minutes, how they dragged along. At length the clock struck twelve; and still the sentinels paced up and down. Three minutes had perhaps elapsed, though to him they seemed many; and then, the great door of the inn opened, and a voice said, "Guard dismissed! quarters, twenty-two. Roll call at dawn!"

There was a clatter of arms, and then side by side the soldiers marched up the town. He

waited till their tramp could no more be heard, then put his head to the door of the room, and listened. Some one was breathing heavily without, as if in sleep. Approaching the window softly, he drew forward the end of the sort of rope he had formed, cast it over, and mounted on the window seat. Then, holding fast with both hands, he contrived to grasp one of the knots with his feet, and slid part of the way down. He loosened one hand, then the other, and then freed his feet. Still the hook and bar held firm, and a moment after, his feet touched the ground.

There was a light burning in a room below; but no one stirred; and passing quietly all along the front of the house, he soon accelerated his pace, and, almost at a run, reached the verge of the little town.

The moon peeped up above the edge of the slope, and Chartley looked eagerly forward. There seemed some dark object under a group of trees about three hundred yards in advance He thought it looked like a horse, but as he

came nearer he saw two, and paused for an instant; but the moment after, came a low sweet whistle, like the note of a bird, and he went on.

Beneath the shade of the trees, he found his own horse and another standing, and a man holding the bridles of both. With a wild feeling of liberty Chartley, without putting foot in stirrup, vaulted on the noble beast's back; and it gave a neigh of joy as if it felt that its lord was free again.

Then drawing forth his purse, the young nobleman would have rewarded the man who held the charger; but in a voice Chartley seemed to know, he said, "Wait, my lord, wait. I go with you to guide you. You go to Tamworth, is it not?"

"To Lichfield, to Lichfield," said Chartley, and he spurred on upon the road which he knew right well. They rode on, the man following some way behind, till Atherston was left afar, and the chance of pursuit became less and less. At the distance of about four miles from the little town, Chartley was overtaken by

his follower, who had put his horse into a gallop, to catch the fleeter beast which the young nobleman was riding.

"To the left, my lord," he said, "to the left, if you must needs to Lichfield, though the earl's army is at Tamworth. The small bridle paths save us a mile and a half, and will not be bad now."

"Who are you?" asked Chartley, turning his horse into a narrow lane, to which the man pointed. "I know your voice, surely."

"Poor Sam the piper," answered the man, "though now rich, and no longer the piper. Now you marvel how I should have been pitched upon to guide you; but that is soon explained. I was sent over by one you know well, to bear some news to the Lord Stanley, and there I heard what was likely to befal you. I would have found means to get you out, if Heaven had not put it in the good lord's mind to be kindly himself; but as I was recommended to him as a man of discretion, who could be trusted; and as I caught a glance of the good

earl of Richmond going in, and told the Lord Stanley so, he might think that it would be well to employ me in what would put me out of the way."

"The good earl of Richmond!" exclaimed Chartley, "has he been with the Lord Stanley?"

"Ay, this very night," replied the other, "with nought but two grooms in company, which shows that he knows his game is very sure."

Chartley mused as he sped onward; for though few doubted, except the one who might have been expected to doubt most, that secret intelligence existed between Richmond and his step-father, yet the young nobleman had not imagined, so bold a step, as a personal conference, would be ventured by either.

It was still dark when he arrived at Lichfield; and Chartley spent more than half an hour in awakening the sleepy ostlers from their beds, and obtaining some accommodation at the principal inn, for there were, at that time, two in the good town. No information could he procure either regarding Iola, or his

men; for there had been so many persons passing to and fro within the last eight-and-forty hours, that no description served to distinguish one from another. There was no lady lodging in the inn, however, one of the ostler's assured him, except "the fat canoness of Salisbury;" and as to the troops, they had all marched out of the town, and gone to Tamworth. Forced to be satisfied with this small intelligence, Chartley gave orders that his good guide should be well taken care of, and that he himself should be awakened at sunrise; and he then cast himself down upon a bed. For the greater part of two nights, and two days, he had not closed an eye; and, notwithstanding much love, and some anxiety, drowsiness overpowered him in a moment; the many busy thoughts which were whirling through his brain, grew confused and indistinct; and he slept.

From a deep, dead, heavy slumber, he woke with a start, and gazed around. The room was full of light. Sounds of busy life made themselves heard on all sides. There was a girl

crying water-cresses in the street, and people laughing and talking in the full-day bustle of the world, while a creaking wood cart wended slowly along, singing its complaining song. It was evident that he had been forgotten; and going to the door, he called loudly for the chamberlain.

The man declared that he knew not any one was sleeping in that room, but informed him it was well nigh ten o'clock, which was confirmed the moment after, by the church clock striking. No other information could he afford, except that no lady was in the house,except the fat canoness; and Chartley instantly set out to inquire at the other inn. There he was likewise disappointed; and to every place where he was likely to gain intelligence, he went in vain. We all know how much time may be occupied in such searches; and at that period, Lichfield was full of monasteries and convents, at each of which Chartley applied. At only one of them, did he gain any indication of the course of the fair fugitive. It was a small community of hospitable nuns,

where the withered portress informed him, that three ladies had slept there the night before, and she did think that one of them had come up to the gates with an odd-looking brown man.

" We do not lodge men," she said, " and so he went somewhere else; but the lady we took in; and she, and the servant, for so he seemed, went away at ten this morning."

Chartley demanded eagerly whither they had gone; and the old sister replied, " To Coventry, I believe. All the three ladies went to Coventry, to get out of the way of the war; for they said there would be a battle to day. Have you heard of such a thing, young gentleman ?"

Chartley replied he had not; but the good woman's words threw his mind upon another train of thought; and he hurried back to the inn.

He leaned his head upon his hand, and meditated. " A battle, and I not present? That must never be. Yet Richmond was at Tamworth last night, and Stanley at Atherston. It can

hardly have been fought. Yet it may be ere nightfall. It is now near four; and many a field has been fought and won, in the hours of daylight that are left." Thus he thought, and then starting up, he called aloud, "Drawer! Drawer! Bring me some wine and bread. Bid them prepare my horse instantly, and call the man who came with me, hither."

The wine and bread were brought; and Sam was soon in the young lord's presence.

"Here, my good friend," said Chartley, giving him some gold. "You have served me well, on this and other occasions, as I learn. I will reward you further, if I live. Now I must away to Tamworth; for I hear there will be a battle soon, if it be not already fought; and I would not, for one half a world, be absent."

"Nor I either, my good lord," replied Sam. "I have always prayed to see another battle, ere I died; and now I've a good chance, which I will not lose. So, with your leave, I'll ride with you."

"Be it as you like," replied Chartley. "But

keep me not; for I depart as soon as I have quitted my score."

One cannot always get out of an inn, however, as soon as one likes; and in those days, all things moved more slowly than they do now. There is nothing in which the advance of society is seen so much as in facilities; and there were few of them in Europe at that period. Men were often a month going the distance they would now travel in two days; and at every step of the road, some drag or another was put upon the wheels of progress. The score was five minutes in reckoning, although the items were but few. The horse was not ready when this was done; and more time elapsed. Both the ostlers had gone out to see a procession of gray friars; and the bit and bridle were not to be found. In all, half an hour was consumed; and then Chartley set off, and rode to Tamworth with speed.

When he entered the little town, all seemed solitary. The setting sun shone quietly through the deserted street. Not a cart, not a waggon

was to be seen; and a dog that came out of one of the houses, and barked at the heels of the horses, was all the indication of life within the place.

"They have marched out, sir," said Sam, who followed him close behind; "and all the good folks have gone after them to see the sport."

"Then there has been no battle yet," answered Chartley; "but we must find out which way they have gone. There is a man talking with some women down that road. Ride down and gather news, while I go on to the inn, the Green Dragon, there, and order some provender for the horses."

Before Sam returned, Chartley learned that Richmond, with his small army, had marched towards Market Bosworth. "He won't get there without a fight," said the elderly host, who had come out at his call, "for King Richard is at the Abbey of Merrival. God help the right!"

"Did you chance, mine host," demanded

Chartley, without dismounting, " to see with the earl's army, the bands of the Lord Chartley ?"

" To be sure, to be sure," answered the host. " They are joined with Sir John Savage's men. They marched in the rear-guard."

Chartley asked their colours and ensigns; and the old man answered readily, showing, that in reality, he knew nothing about them; and, after feeding his horses, Chartley rode on towards Bosworth.

As the young nobleman advanced, he met numerous groups of Tamworth people returning to the town at nightfall; and from them he obtained information sufficient for his guidance. The two armies he found were in presence; and a battle on the following day was certain. Richard's head-quarters were at the Abbey of Merrival; but Richmond had pitched his tent in the field. The number of the king's army was greatly exaggerated; and many of the men shrugged their shoulders, as they spoke of Richmond's force, evidently judging that his cause was hopeless.

"He had better have waited a day or two," said an elderly man, riding on a cart, which had apparently conveyed some of the baggage of the army; "for people were flocking to him very fast; but, fighting now, he will be overwhelmed; and, if I were you, young gentleman, I would keep myself from others' ill-luck."

"I should deserve bad luck myself if I did," replied Chartley, and rode on.

Night now fell heavily; but soon after a noise began to be heard. First came a murmur, like that of the distant sea; and then, as the young nobleman spurred forward, louder sounds separated themselves from the indistinct buzz. Voices shouting, ringing laughter, and the clang of arms were heard. Twice, too, there was the blast of a trumpet; but that was more distant; and Chartley found that he must be approaching the rear of Richmond's host.

Small as was the force with which the earl had landed in England, and, small as it was still, when he encamped on Bosworth field, it

had not failed to attract, as it marched on, a number of the idle, the dissolute, and the greedy, in even a greater proportion, than is usually the case. The camp was kept clear by sentinels; but for full half a mile, before he could see a tent, Chartley passed through innumerable groups of men and women, and even children, from Tamworth and Lichfield, and as far as Shrewsbury. He had no difficulty in passing the sentinels, however, though he had not the word; for to say truth, they kept no very strict watch; and his appearance was passport sufficient.

When he had entered the little camp he inquired for his own men in vain for nearly an hour. It was too dark to see the colours, or the ensigns of the different leaders, though most of them had a banner or a pennon pitched before his tent; and along the whole of the left wing of the army he passed without gaining any intelligence. At length some one told him, that a body of horse, which had joined the earl at Tamworth, was encamped on the extreme right, near a mo-

rass. "There where you see those fires," said the man; "for they brought no tents with them, and have cut down the apple trees in a goodman's orchard to keep themselves warm."

Chartley turned his horse thither, and rode on quickly; but at the first fire he came to, he found no faces round it which he knew; and the men took little notice of him. As he drew near the second, however, a man who was sitting by it, turned his head, and then starting on his feet, waved his steel cap in the air, crying out aloud, "Here is my lord, here is my lord!"

Instantly the whole body sprang up, with a shout of gratulation; and in a minute after, the master of the young lord's household, and several of the leaders of his bands, had gathered round his horse.

Chartley's first inquiries were with regard to Iola; but the account of the master of his household satisfied him that she had taken her way to Lichfield, accompanied by Ibn Ayoub alone. He thought it strange, indeed, that she should have gone on to Coventry; but he doubted not

that something had occurred which he knew not of, to make her decide upon such a course. The old man went on to explain that, following the directions contained in the letter which his lord had left with him, the soldiers, on being expelled from Fazely by the troops of Lord Stanley, had immediately gone to join the forces of the earl of Richmond.

"We were in sad alarm about you, my lord," he continued; "but, thank God, here you are safe. Would it were so with good Sir William Arden too."

"Ha, have you news of him?" demanded Chartley.

"Ay, my lord, sad news," replied the old man. "Two men, who came over to join us from the enemy, about an hour ago, tell me that he was caught upon the road, stealing a nun from a convent, that he and his men turned and fought like tigers, while she and a woman who was with her, made their escape. I said it was nonsense; for Sir William was always a very sober and discreet gentleman, rather rough

with his tongue, but a good man at heart. One of the men, however, swears it is true, declares that he kept guard over him himself, in the king's camp out there, and that his head is to be struck off to-morrow morning, between the two armies."

"Are the men here?" demanded Chartley.

"Yes, my noble lord," replied the other.

"Then bring them to me," said Chartley; and dismounting from his horse, he seated himself by the fire.

CHAPTER XVI.

SHAKESPEARE made a mistake. The morning was bright and clear, and the sun shone strong and powerfully, drawing up a light mist from a marsh which lay between a part of the earl of Richmond's forces, and the much larger army of the king. At an early hour in the morning, all was bustle and preparation; and notwithstanding a great inferiority in point of numbers, a calm and steady cheerfulness reigned in Richmond's army, which was not the case in the royal host. There, each man looked upon his neighbour with doubt; and rumours were current of

emissaries, from the enemy's camp, having been seen busily passing from tent to tent, amongst the king's troops, which was evinced by the doggerel lines fixed on the duke of Norfolk's pavilion, as well as by several other circumstances which made a noise for a moment or two, but were soon forgotten. The impression, however, existed and gained strength, that much dissatisfaction reigned amongst the leaders; and when the forces of Lord Stanley appeared on the one wing, and those of his brother on the other, without advancing nearer than half a mile, fresh doubts and suspicions arose.

The manœuvres on both parts, before the action began, were few and simple. A tardy sort of lethargy seemed to have fallen upon Richard; and though he rode forth with a crown upon his helmet, as if desirous of courting personal danger, he moved his men but little, till the day was considerably advanced.

Richmond, rode over the whole field in person, accompanied by the earl of Oxford, Sir William Brandon, Sir Gilbert Talbot, and Sir John Savage,

and caused the marsh to be examined and its depth tried with a lance. He then commanded a considerable movement to the left, with a slight advance of the right wing, so as to allow the extreme of the line to rest upon the edge of the morass, with the position which he thus took up, fronting the north west. He was observed to smile when he saw the position assumed by Lord Stanley, in front of the morass and to his own right, commanding the whole of the open field, between the twoarmies; and immediately after, the earl of Oxford pointed out to him another considerable body of troops, advanced to a spot exactly facing those of Stanley; so that the ground enclosed between the four lines, appeared very like a tilt yard on a large scale.

Richmond nodded his head, merely saying, "They are Sir William's men." Then turning round, he demanded, "Which are Lord Chartley's troops?"

"Here, my lord," said a man from the ranks.

"I fear poor Chartley is not here to head

them," said the earl of Oxford, in a low tone, running his eye along the line.

"He was here last night," said Richmond, "and sent me a strange note, saying he would be with me betimes this morning; but he has not come."

"My lord, the enemy is moving in two lines," said a horseman, riding up; and cantering back to the centre of his force, the rest of Richmond's arrangements were soon made. His disposition in some respects resembled that of his adversary. In two lines also his men were ranged, having somewhat the advantage of the ground, but the great advantage of the sun behind them, while the fierce rays shone strong in the face of Richard's soldiers.

The earl of Oxford commanded the first division, Richmond himself the second, Talbot, one wing, and Sir John Savage, the other; and all the leaders knew that death awaited them if they were taken.

In what are called pitch battles, not brought on by skirmishing or any accidental circumstance,

but where parties meet with the full determination of casting all upon the stake, there is generally a short pause before the strife begins. For, perhaps, a minute, or a minute and a half, after the troops were within less than a bow shot distance of each other, and each could see the long line of faces under the steel caps of the archers in the opposite ranks, there was a dead silence ; the trumpets ceased to sound ; each bowman stood with his arm and foot extended ; the fiery cavalry reined in their horses ; and one might have heard a drop of rain, had it fallen upon the dry grass. Then, a baton was thrown up into the air on Richard's side ; and every man of the centre front line drew his bow string to his ear and sent an arrow into the ranks of the enemy. Nor was this flight of missiles without reply ; for closer and faster still, though not so numerous, fell the shafts from Richmond's little host amongst the adverse troops. Their aim was truer too ; for the eyes of his men were not dazzled by the bright beams which poured into the faces of the enemy ; and many of the foe were seen to fall, while a good deal of confusion spread

along the line. Mounted on a tall horse, on the summit of a little mound, towards the centre of the second line, Richmond could see over the whole field; and marking the disarray of the centre of Richard's army, he said aloud, "Now had we men enough for a charge on that point, we might win the day at once."

"You and yours were lost, did you attempt it," said a deep voice near; and looking round, the earl saw a tall figure, mounted on a strong black horse, with armour, not the best polished in the world, though of fine quality and workmanship, and bearing in his hand a sharp stout lance, which in addition to the long tapering point, carried the blade of an axe, like that of a woodman, forming altogether a weapon somewhat resembling an ordinary halbert. His horse was totally without armour: even the saddle was of common leather; but the stranger bore the spurs of knighthood; and over his neck hung a gold collar, and a star.

"Why say you so, sir knight?" demanded Richmond.

"Look to the right," replied the stranger; and turning his eyes in that direction, the earl beheld a horseman galloping at full speed towards the centre of Richard's line, where the king evidently was in person, while the large body of horse, commanded by the duke of Norfolk, was seen gliding down between the marsh and the troops of Lord Stanley. It was a moment of intense anxiety; but at the same instant Chartley's squadrons of horse were seen to fall back a little, in good order, so as to face the road leading round the morass; and Stanley's whole force wheeled suddenly on its right, so as to join the earl's line, and nearly hem in the duke of Norfolk, between it and the marsh.

Richard's cavalry instantly halted and retreated in perfect array, just in time to save themselves from destruction. They did not escape without a charge however; and at the same time, the two front lines of the armies advancing upon each other, the battle raged hand to hand all along the field.

It was just at this moment, that coming up from the rear, a little to the left of the spot where the earl of Richmond stood, rode forward a young knight in splendid armour, mounted on a beautiful gray horse. By his side was a man no longer young, though still in the prime of life, totally unarmed, even without sword or dagger; and behind came ten spears wearing the colours of Lord Chartley. The young nobleman paused for an instant, gazing over the field, and the strange confused sight presented by a battle, at a period when cannon were little used and no clouds of smoke obscured the view, extending over a line of more than half a mile. Here squadrons of horse were seen charging the enemy's line: there two cavaliers seemed to have sought each other out in single combat: in one place a company of foot was pushing on with the levelled pike; in another, the archers with their short swords were striving hand to hand: the banners and pennons waved in the wind, fluttered, and rose and fell; and long and repeated blasts of the

trumpet sounded to the charge, and animated the soldiers to the fight.

It was a wild, a sad, a savage, but an exciting scene; and Chartley's face, as he gazed with his visor up, looked like that of an eager young horse, furious to start upon a course.

"There is the earl, Chartley," said Sir William Arden. "That is his standard. The taller one in front must be the man."

Chartley instantly turned his horse, and rode up to Richmond's side.

"I am late upon the field, my lord," he said, "but I will make up for lost time. I went to save my noble friend, Sir William Arden here, from the headsman's axe. I beseech you keep him with you; for you will find his counsel good, and he is unarmed. Whither shall I go?"

"Lord Chartley, I presume," said Richmond, "a gallant soldier never comes too late to be of glorious use. There, straight forward on your path is your noble friend, the earl

of Oxford. I beseech you give him help. He is sore pressed and terribly outnumbered."

"Follow!" cried Chartley, turning to his men and raising his arm; and down he dashed into the thickest of the fight.

Small, though the aid was, the effect was soon apparent. Some ground which had been lost was regained in an instant: the first line of Richard's troops was pressed back in the centre. The banner of Lord Oxford made way in advance; but just then Sir William Brandon exclaimed, "Richard is coming down with all his power, my lord."

"Then must we not be behind," replied Richmond. "Advance the banner, Brandon! Good men and true, keep your men back yet a while, till you receive command. Then down upon the boar and pin him to the earth; for I will leave my bones upon the field or win this day. Thus saying, he rode on towards a spot which had been left vacant in the struggle which was going on; and those who were above could see that a group of some twenty or thirty

persons from the enemy's side moved down as if to meet him. The greater part, however, paused where the two lines were still striving man to man, some engaging in the combat, some gazing idly forward.

One, man, however, with two or three pages running by his side, burst from the rest like the lightning from a cloud. He was covered with gorgeous armour; his mighty horse was sheathed in steel; and circling round his helmet, beneath the waving plume, appeared the royal crown of England. Straight towards Richmond he dashed, trampling down a foot soldier in his way, and rising the gentle slope, with his lance in the rest, without the slightest relaxation of his horse's speed.

"Mine, mine!" cried Sir William Brandon. "Mine to win a coronet!" and giving the standard to another, he couched his lance and bore down to meet the king. But that unerring hand failed not. The eye was but too keen. Straight in the throat, the point of Richard's spear struck the standard bearer, and hurled him dead upon the plain, while the knight's

own lance shivered on the king's corslet. Brandon's horse also rolled upon the ground, but Richard leaped his charger over it with a shout, and spurred on.

Without asking leave, Sir John Cheney darted forth to meet him. His fate, however, was but little better; for, though not slain, he was hurled wounded from the saddle in an instant. But at that moment, Richard was met by a new adversary; for, as he was rapidly approaching the spot where Richmond stood, the tall knight, whom I have mentioned, sprang from his unarmed horse and threw himself on foot in the king's way. Richard checked up his horse for an instant at the unexpected sight, and dropped the point of his lance, to strike this new adversary in the face; but ere he could accomplish it, with a tremendous sweep of both his arms, the knight struck him on the side of the helmet. The lacings gave way. The casque and crown fell off; and a deep stream of gore flowed down the pale face, which was seen, as he hung for a moment in the stirrups. The horse rushed on;

but the king soon dropped upon the field; and three or four footmen springing on him, dispatched him with their daggers.

The tall knight leaned for an instant on the staff of his weapon, and looked up and down the field! and then, as if he had gathered all in that brief glance, he exclaimed, in a loud and vehement voice. "Now, earl of Richmond, gaze not on the dead, but on to support the living! Sir William Stanley is charging the enemy in the flank. On with your whole force! And the day is yours. If not, it may be lost still. Give me my horse, boy."

The order was instantly given: the whole force of Richmond moved down the hill; and though the struggle was protracted for some twenty minutes longer, it was no longer doubtful. All was confusion indeed, in the ranks of Richard; but Norfolk and many other noble gentlemen struggled to the last, and died without yielding an inch of ground. Northumberland took no part in the fight; and others fled soon, while others again remained to be made

prisoners; but steadily the earl of Richmond's line advanced, till the whole of Richard's host, either lay on Bosworth field, or were in full flight across the country.

At the end of two hours from the commencement of the battle, the trumpet sounded the recall; and, Richmond's tent was set up, on the spot where Richard had commanded at the beginning of the day. The curtains were drawn up, and knights and noblemen crowded round, while the field was searched, to ascertain the numbers and the quality of the slain. Litters, formed hastily of lances laid across, were seen moving about the plain, bearing the wounded from the field of carnage; and many a group might be observed, in distant parts of the prospect, engaged probably in less pious offices.

Richmond, now on foot, and with his casque laid aside, stood for several minutes gazing silently on the scene before him: and, oh, who shall tell what passed through his mind at that moment? How often has the flood of success

a petrifying effect upon the heart! and doubtless, it was so with him; but he had then just stepped in to those Lethe waters, which, so often drown in dull oblivion all the nobler and more generous feelings of the soul.

Nobody ventured to break upon his silence; for, it was evident to all, that strong emotions were busy at his heart, till, at length, a voice without, said—

"Lord Stanley!" and many others took it up, repeating, 'Stanley, Stanley!'"

Richmond took a step forward; but ere he reached the verge of the tent, Stanley himself appeared. He bore in his hands the royal crown, which Richard had carried on his helmet, and, without a word, he advanced straight to Richmond, and placed it on his brows. Then bending the knee, he said, aloud—

"Hail, king of England! Long live our sovereign lord, King Henry the Seventh!"

Richmond embraced him warmly, while a shout rent the air, and some words passed between the two which no ear heard. Then

advancing with the crown upon his head, Henry graciously thanked those around him for their aid and service, adding a few words upon the glorious event of the day.

"There is one, however," he continued, "whom I see not here, and to whom double thanks are due. I cannot name him, for I know him not; but his hand defended my life when two gallant gentlemen had fallen before my enemy, and his hand slew the usurper of the crown I now bear. He wore round his neck the collar and star of some foreign order, and—"

"He is fearfully wounded, sire," said Lord Chartley, who had just come up. "That litter, which you see yonder, is bearing him, at his own request, to the abbey of St. Clare. He earnestly besought me to entreat your grace, if your time would permit, to pass thither for a brief space, on your march. He is a man of high and noble birth, allied to a royal house; but I must say no more. The rest he will tell you, if he live till you arrive."

Noble Lord Chartley, to you too I owe

great thanks," said Henry, "and they shall be paid in coin that you will like full well. But this noble gentleman has taken strong possession of my mind. How did he fall?—I saw him late in the battle, safe and foremost."

"True, sire," replied Chartley, "he was before Sir George Talbot and myself, as we followed the last troops of the enemy which kept together, to disperse them. Then, however, just on the brow of the hill, the young Lord Fulmer turned with his band, and bore my noble friend down with his lance while he was contending with two men in front."

"But you avenged him, Chartley," said Sir George Talbot, "for you carried the young serpent back on your lance's point, like an eel on an eel spear. He will never take odds against a gallant knight more."

"I know not that," said Chartley; "for I saw him remounted and led away between two servants. But, if your grace will visit the noble gentleman, of whom you spoke, I will

forward at once and bear the tidings after him."

"I will not fail," replied Henry, "'tis but a mile or two about I believe; and, as soon as we have taken some order here, I ride thither ere I go to Leicester."

Chartley thanked him and retired; and the king, calling a page, whispered to him some brief words, adding aloud, "To Tamworth then, with all speed. Say, there must be no delay—no, not a moment."

CHAPTER XVII.

In a small room, in the stranger's lodging at the abbey of St. Clare of Atherston, lay the form of a wounded man, upon a low bed. A lady sat by the pillow weeping; and the abbess was near the head of the bed, with her eyes overflowing too, while the priest stood near, with a boy in white garments behind him.

"Not yet, not yet, good father," said the wounded man, "I am still very strong—too strong. Nay, weep not Mary, you have shed tears enough for me already in your life; and in good sooth thus would I die. My heart

is light and happy, my dear wife; and I look up in trust and hope. Knightly in my harness have I met my fate; and I am cheered by my lady's love. I trust Richmond will come before I go; for as my journey is long, we might not meet again for many years; and I would fain insure all, that there be no shade on my departure."

"Lord Chartley expects him instantly, my noble son," replied the abbess, "he is waiting his arrival now under the gateway. Oh, had I known your rank and dear ties, to my poor brother St. Leger, when I but thought you a poor woodman, you should have had every tenant of the abbey to lead to fight, for the house of Lancaster."

"The king!" said Chartley, opening the door; and, with a slow step, and look of sympathy, Henry entered and approached the dying man's bed-side.

"How can I enough thank you, sir?" he said, "and how can I enough regret the fate of such a knight?"

"Regret it not, sir," replied the other, gazing firmly in Henry's face, "for I regret it not. Nor do I need thanks. I have fought for that side on which I fought and bled in years gone by. I am content to die in arms. I wish no better. But I have a boon to crave, not for ought done in this day's field; but for a service rendered months ago, when Bishop Morton bore to Henry of Richmond, the proof of a plot to yield him to the hands of his fell enemy."

"I remember well," replied Henry, "but he told me, he had those proofs from a poor woodman, who was called Boyd."

"He told you true," replied the other, "the woodman lies before you, but none the less, Thomas Boyd, earl of Arran."

Henry started, and his politic mind ran on into the future; but he replied, almost at once—

"I vowed that I would grant whatever boon was in my power to grant, to that same woodman, and I will not break my oath. Name your request, my noble friend."

"It is but this," answered the earl, "that by your royal will and prerogative, passing over all opposition and obstacles, you will at once, and without delay, unite in marriage, a lady, called the Lady Iola St. Leger, to that young lord, standing behind you now."

"But," cried the abbess, "there is a contract—"

"Cease, cease, good mother," said the wounded man, "such contracts must be thrown in the fire. There is a better contract between her and Chartley."

"Nay, but my brother, her uncle," said the abbess, "he signed the contract on her behalf, with the Lord Fulmer."

"A better than her uncle signed the contract with that young lord," replied the dying earl, "her father, lady abbess—her father, whom this Lord Fulmer slew. Ay, marvel not, Lady! Your brother's daughter died, in his sad flight, when dark misfortune overwhelmed the house of Lancaster. There were then dangers

and miseries as dark, over my hapless race; and that generous friend took my dear child, to save her and me from greater difficulties still, and passed her for his own. Slain by the foe, he had not time to tell his weaker, but more prosperous brother, or yourself; but the proofs are in my hands. Did I not visit her here, more than ten years ago, and gaze at her, through my closed visor, lest the tears that washed my cheek, should betray the secret? Have I not watched over her ever since that hour, when I fell wounded for the house of Lancaster? But here are the proofs, my lord. Take them, and grant my boon. I would fain have seen them wedded before I die; but that cannot be; for I am waning fast; and now, let no vain mourning for the dead impede their union —no, not an hour. Do you grant my boon, Henry of England?"

"I do and willingly," replied Henry: "were that contract even valid, I would cast it to the winds, sooner than see the child wed the slaugh-

terer of her father. But it cannot be valid. Nay, my good lord, I will do more. With these proofs in my hand, I will o'erstep all ceremonies. You said but now, that you would fain see this union ere your death. If you do really so will—if it will be comfort to you on your bed of pain, from which I trust you will yet rise to health—let the marriage take place at once, and I will justify it with my sanction. My first act of royalty shall be, to bring a satisfaction to a friend who has served me."

"Alas, it cannot be, sir," replied the earl of Arran; "my child is far away—at Coventry, they tell me; and my race is well nigh run. I shall, indeed, rise from this bed to health, but it will be to health immortal, I do trust; but never more can I behold my child."

Sobs from the side of his pillow interrupted him, and, taking Mary's hand, he said, "Nay, Mary, nay!—My lord, the king, you were about to speak."

"'Twas but to say," replied Henry, "that

this may not be so impossible as you think. I trust your hour is still far off. Your voice is strong."

"Because my will is strong; but I interrupt you rudely," said the earl.

"However that may be—if to see your child safe, guarded by a marriage bond with one who can protect her strongly, and will love her truly, or I am no judge of men," replied Henry, "can bring comfort to you, even in this hour, 'tis not impossible—All wait here a moment."

He left the room, and in a few minutes returned, leading in Iola herself.

"Now calmly, my good lord," he said, as the earl raised himself quickly to catch her in his arms, "I sent for her from Lichfield to Tamworth yesterday, thinking this good lord would meet her there. Three hours ago, I sent for her on Bosworth field, bidding her join me here, and purposing to unite her to my noble friend at once. Thus your boon was granted, ere it was asked, and you must seek another. She has

brought a bridesmaid with her, too, from Tamworth. The Lady Constance, too, I think they called her."

"Let it be quick," said the earl of Arran, in an altered voice, unclasping his arms from the fair form they held; "let it be quick!"

A few moments passed in explanation to Iola; and for a time she bent down her eyes and wept. But the earl repeated, "Let it be quick! Iola, lose no time;" and drying her eyes, she said sadly but sweetly,

"I will obey you to the last, my father."

There was a group ranged round the bed-side of the dying man, some five minutes after. The princess Mary held his hand in hers, and leaned her head upon his shoulder. Iola's hand was clasped in that of Chartley; and the priest, with an open book, read hurriedly the binding words, while the low answer gave assent.

As he ended, the wounded man said in a voice as strong as ever, "Amen!" and then placed his hand over his eyes.

It rested there.

They gazed upon him anxiously. He stirred not.

The priest hurried to his side, removed the hand. He looked upon the face of the dead.

THE END.

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